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**Local Governance in the Age of Liberal
Interventionism: Governance Relations in the post-2001
Afghanistan**

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
by
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September 2014

Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines and assesses the effects of two internationally sponsored local governance programmes formulated, designed and implemented by Afghanistan's Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), their purported aim to build village and district level institutions and change the way local populations shape their governance relations. The study adopts a set of theoretical lenses including hybridity and ethnography of aid combined with a historical political economy approach which aims to show how, mediated by local power structures and gender relations, these interventions unfolded in practice and had complex and unexpected outcomes on the ground. The study is the result of fourteen months field research conducted in Kabul (to look at national level processes), one village in Behsud, Nangarhar and two villages in Yakawlang, Bamyan.

The study presents Afghan districts and villages as micro-site(s) of intervention, where central government programmes are only one among many interventions led by different national and international actors and institutions. The selection of local governance programmes by the two institutions is based on different (at times conflicting) rationales: MRRD's programme followed 'legal-rational' bureaucratic logic, while IDLG, though following a similar logic in its policy papers, in practice was heavily influenced by the existing patronage-based networks related to the government's key political elites. Furthermore, the international sponsors of these programmes supported these differing logics based on their short and long-term interests. The local actors embraced certain aspects of the interventions that furthered their interests in terms of capturing resources that strengthened their authority and resisted those aspects that challenged prevailing patrimonial power structures. Hence, studying these two examples generates insights into both the way power and gender relations work in Afghan society and the complex form of hybrid arrangements that emerges as a result of these encounters between international, national and local players.

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List of Abbreviations

ASOP/SOP	Afghan Social Outreach Programme
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Programme
CDC	Community Development Council
CD	Community Development
CDD	Community Driven Development
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CT	Counter Terrorism
DDA	District Development Assembly
FP	Facilitating Partner
GIROA	Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IMF	International Monetary Funds
ISAF	International Security Allied Forces
K&A	Katakhana and Akhundun
KDP	Kecamatan Development Programme
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NABDP	National Area Based Development Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
QJK	Qala-e-Janan Khan
SM	Social Mobiliser
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WB	The World Bank

Chapter One: Introduction

1. Studying Local Governance Relations

This thesis is shaped and influenced by my broader experiences as a development practitioner over the past decade and a half, during which time I have been involved in development programming at different levels – from being its recipient as a refugee to delivering assistance and working as a UNDP programme officer overseeing the formulation and operationalisation of some of the governance programme interventions at a macro level. In the course of these varying experiences and interactions with policy makers, practitioners, experts and scholars, I have come to realise that there is a significant level of ambiguity in the way local power relations and governance practices are understood in the context of Afghanistan, particularly in relation to how, historically and in more recent times, local governance relations have evolved as a result of varying forms of interventions. In this study, I look at the particularities of local governance in Afghanistan as a case, but also aim to situate this within the broader context of liberal interventionism.

International efforts to intervene in developing countries have changed and evolved over the past decades. Local governance interventions have been implemented through different means and with different rationales, including programmes focusing on institution building, and direct service provision, as well as the channelling of resources through the military in order to ‘win hearts and minds’ and central government’s efforts to strengthen patronage networks of national elites in key and leading government positions. International actors, whether acting directly or through central government partners, aimed to bring developing countries under their orbit through a global system of governance, and by creating particular institutional forms and rules of the game at the local level.

Central governments in developing countries often operate differently to those of so-called advanced democracies given their historical trajectories of *state-formation* and *state-building* (Khan 2005). Hence, although these governments are heavily dependent on, or in some cases exist only because of, the financial and political support of these international institutions, they have their own agendas and interests in how these interventions are played out in their countries, interests which may or may not correspond with those of the international actors. The primary target of these interventions is the local population and their representatives or intermediaries. Therefore the site of intervention turns into an arena of power struggles where

sovereignty, legitimacy and authority is negotiated and contested among the population, local elites, central government, international and transnational actors and institutions (Heathershaw and Lambach 2008:269).

This thesis therefore, explores the origins, rationalities and logics of external actors (including international and central government actors and institutions) in the formulation, design and operationalisation of local governance interventions. Local governance is defined as a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes through which people negotiate their interests and needs and mediate their differences by exercising their rights and obligations at the local level (Lutz and Linder 2004:16). The exercise of local governance involves formal and informal institutions and actors who take part in these processes.

The thesis will investigate the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) as a part of the global scheme of the World Bank's Community Driven Development (CDD) model, and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) at the national level in Kabul and how, as a result of interventions by the two institutions, local governance relations evolved in the case of three villages in Afghanistan: Qala-e-Janan Khan in the Behsud district of Nangarhar, and Katakhan and Akhund in Yakawlang district of Bamyan.

This thesis explores the competing agendas of different intervening forces and the question of who 'owns' the village and its governance affairs becomes a contested matter at the national level; at the same time the local population adopt a range of strategies in response to these interventions, from resistance, to collusion and co-optation. The thesis challenges the notion of an unchanging 'continuity' of patronage structures at the local level (see Schetter 2013). The research revealed a two way process of adaptation and accommodation as well as subversion and resistance. This thesis also highlights the complex and discursive nature of liberal peace-building interventions (Heathershaw 2008) by unpacking different approaches to local governance programme interventions used by the central government and its international sponsors. Finally, I argue that, contrary to the assumption that local governance institution building is a product of a pre-defined blueprint to set up a modern form of state institutions in the villages and districts, governance relations and governance interventions should be studied as an empirical reality that will enable us to understand the actual form of relations that emerge as a result of these complex and competing processes. By adopting a historical political economy approach that is complemented with hybridity and ethnographies of aid, the thesis examines the

complex set of processes that resulted in the evolution of local governance relations in the selected sites.

The thesis is based on fourteen months of field research and data collection conducted between July 2011 and September 2012 in Kabul and the Nangarhar and Bamyan provinces of Afghanistan.¹ One hundred and forty one interviews were conducted with different actors involved in the processes of design, formulation and establishment of the NSP programme and IDLG institution and the village populations who were directly or indirectly involved in the implementation of the NSP and other interventions by the central government in their localities.

2. Problem Justification

The local governance relations that actually emerge as a result of local governance programme interventions in contemporary Afghanistan is under-researched (Schetter 2013). Often, research on local governance relations has focused on following a programme or project cycle rather than a specific context and period (see, for instance, Boesen 2004; Kakar 2005; Barakat et al. 2006; Noelle-Karimi 2006; Brick 2008; Nixon 2008; Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2010; Beath et al. 2013; Monsutti 2012). This has resulted in the existing limited understanding of local power relations and an in-depth analysis of the actors involved in these processes and the overall political economy of local governance relations. Some still consider Afghanistan local settings as led by 'tribes'² or operating as 'mini republics' (Pain and Kantor 2010), while others argue that governance relations are completely transformed as a result of democratic institution building through interventions such as the National Solidarity Programme (MRRD 2014).³ In my view, neither opinion represents a thorough understanding of contemporary power dynamics and governance relations that emerge as a result of these local governance interventions.

Local governance programme interventions are predominantly influenced by, or based on, two assumptions: 1) that local institution building is a mechanical process that relies on following manuals and pre-defined steps and 2) that once these institutions are in

¹ I spent one full year (June 2011-July 2012) in the field; between July and September 2012, I gathered primary and secondary data from a distance, while I was based in London.

² See, for example, the US military literature on the understanding of Afghanistan: "one tribe at a time" (Major Jim Gant 2009) http://www.stevenpressfield.com/wpcontent/uploads/2009/10/one_tribe_at_a_time_ed2.pdf (accessed on 18.09.2014).

³ See, for example, documents produced by the MRRD on impacts of the National Solidarity Programme.

place, they either completely dismantle what already existed or they exist in complete isolation from 'traditional' or customary structures and actors.

In this study, I challenge both assumptions by arguing that: 1) what determines how institutions are formed is a complex set(s) of processes where negotiations, interactions and contestations occur between different actors and structures within a local setting and the formal and informal actors and structures that they have relations with, and 2) I argue that neither the institutions and structures established as a result of local governance programme interventions continue to function in isolation, nor do the existing power structures, elites and actors in the given context remained isolated from or neutral to these interventions. Instead, only by looking at a village or local setting as a micro site of intervention, learning about its power dynamics, and analysing its key actors in terms of socio-political and economic status and how they exercise public authority, influence different mechanisms of village governance and following the everyday practices of governance relations, are we able to understand actually existing governance relations and how they are affected by different programme interventions.

There are different ways of looking at and studying these local governance programme interventions. I first draw upon writings on liberal peace-building, institution building and 'good governance' where, by covering both its policy oriented and critical variants, an entry point is created for understanding the declared goals and underlying logic of international interventions in the area of governance. I then draw upon historical political economy perspectives to examine governance, not as an ideal type model, but as an empirical reality that is shaped by competing material interests and power relations in specific contexts at particular historical moments. **Chapter two** further expands on both these approaches in order to set out a theoretical framework for the rest of this study.

3. Research Purpose, Questions and Methods

The purpose of this thesis is to present an exploration of the complex dynamics surrounding the implementation and effects of local governance programmes in the context of a hyper-politicised and multi-mandated intervention in Afghanistan. By adopting a set of theoretical lenses including hybridity, ethnographies of aid and a historical political economy approach, I look at governance as an empirical reality rather than a blueprint model to be replicated in varying contexts. Inspired by Tania Murray Li, in this thesis, I do not judge the programmes' success rate, nor do I aim to present recommendations on how they could be improved (Li 2007). I rather aim to

present first, an understanding of the origins, rationales and logics underlying these interventions in the national and broader context of liberal interventionism and second, to examine the complex and hybrid form of governance relations that evolves as a result of the local governance interventions.

The following are the central research questions that guided my research:

The overarching question is:

How have local governance programmes and policies been designed and implemented in Afghanistan and what effects have they had on local power structures?

My key sub-questions are:

- 1. What were the underlying rationales and interests behind the MRRD and IDLG interventions and how was this reflected in their design and planning at the national level?*
- 2. How were the MRRD's NSP and the IDLG interventions, including their gender conditionality, received by elites and the wider population of women and men at the local level?*
- 3. What effects did these interventions have on local governance and power relations, and how, if at all, did they differ from those intended by the programme planners and implementers?*
4. How does this research relate to and contribute to wider theoretical and policy debates on the efficacy and desirability of local governance programme interventions in conflict-affected contexts?

Methods and ethics

Methodologically, this study follows an extended case method based on qualitative multi-sited ethnography. A flexible multi-sited approach enabled me to follow people, connections, associations and relations across space or in multiple locations (Falzon 2009:1-2). For instance, I chose Kabul to investigate how local governance programme interventions were formulated, designed and negotiated between different international and national actors, and villages and districts in Nangarhar and Bamyān provinces, in order to examine how these interventions affected local power dynamics and governance locations in those localities. The informants for this study varied from ordinary men and women in the selected villages to senior Afghan government politicians and leaders and international actors including military and civilian members

of different donor communities. The primary data for this research were collected through a variety of methods including semi-structured interviews, participant observation notes, key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

Research in conflict-affected contexts has its own sensitivities and requires precautionary measures that the researcher should consider for her/his own safety as well as the safety and protection of her/his informants and other supporting persons. Although the topic of this study did not -on the whole -involve sensitive matters that could endanger an informant, I have been particularly careful to ensure informants' anonymity on potentially sensitive matters. I also kept a very close eye on political and security developments through the course of research.

As an Afghan with previous experience occupying different roles from development practitioner, advocate for social justice, women's rights/human rights and civil society, and indeed a student of Development Studies, I have not only experienced these interventions in different ways, but also have contributed to the way these processes are shaped, both indirectly and directly. In this thesis, while I take a more reflective and critical approach by examining and questioning some of the notions, my prior experience means that I am both an 'insider' and 'outsider'.

Selection of field sites

This thesis looks at districts and villages as micro site(s) of local governance interventions. To this end, I selected one village in the Behsud district of Nangarhar Province and two villages in the Yakawlang district of Bamyan Province.⁴ These selections were made on the basis of their diversity in terms of their geo-strategic importance, history of relations with the central government, diversity of population in terms of socio-political identities, proximity to government institutions, etc. For each context I provide a broader historical and political economy analysis of governance relations in Nangarhar and Bamyan, followed by an overview of the post-2001 period.

4. Outline of Chapters

This thesis consists of eight chapters.

Chapter one, (this chapter), outlines the purpose and aim of the thesis, explains the reason for selecting this topic and the particular case studies and offers a brief summary of the following chapters.

⁴ A third location in Herat Province was also planned initially but, due to travel and security limitations, had to be abandoned.

Chapter two sets the conceptual framework for the thesis by engaging with the broader literature on liberal intervention and governance, ethnography of aid and political economy approaches. The key argument that the chapter follows is the necessity of approaching governance as an empirical reality rather than an ideal blueprint that is to be replicated. By focusing on the power relations and material interests of both the intervening forces as well as the recipients or subjects of the intervention in a particular context and time, this chapter first introduces the literature on liberal peace-building and 'good governance' in order to understand the declared goals and rationales of international actors and their efforts to build and promote local governance in conflict-affected settings. It then draws on the critique of this literature, followed by expanding briefly on the ethnography of aid and how that helps us in the study of programmatic interventions; and, finally, explores a historical political economy approach for further in-depth analysis of the context in which these interventions take place. By examining the literature on (neo)patrimonialism, patriarchy and its relationship to patrimonial and neopatrimonial systems of rule, hybrid political orders and political settlements as lenses that provide an entry point for studying local governance programme interventions in Afghanistan, the chapter develops a theoretical framework drawing upon these lenses in order to study local governance relations in the context of liberal interventionism.

In **chapter three**, I introduce the methodological choices that shaped the overall process of this research. The research focused on studying the reciprocal relations between the different actors and institutions involved in the programmes in particular site(s) of intervention(s). The chapter starts by explaining my position as an 'insider/outsider' in the course of this study. It then introduces the extended case method, followed by the research design where I explain the selection of the research methods and then elaborate on the criteria used to select the research sites. Finally, I consider the ethical and security challenges of carrying out research in a conflict-affected context.

Chapter four outlines the context of the research by providing background on how local governance relations in Afghanistan have evolved historically. This chapter shows that local governance relations in Afghanistan cannot be studied solely with reference to the formal practices and actions of government officials or international forces; it demonstrates that local governance relations are frequently the inadvertent result of unplanned and informal processes of bargaining, conflict, contestation and negotiations that take place between local elites and different formal and informal intervening actors

and institutions. The chapter examines key episodes and features of changing patterns of local governance relations in the pre- and post-2001 periods showing that, in order to understand local governance relations in the post-2001 context, it is necessary to appreciate their evolution over time – from the imperial interventions of the 19th and 20th centuries to the contemporary efforts that have continuously reshaped local power relations. The chapter provides an overview of local governance interventions in the pre-2001 historical context, then draws on conceptual understandings of ‘the local’ or village governance and the village itself and how they have changed in different historical periods. Finally, it assesses broader sub-national governance relations in the post-2001 period.

Chapter five provides the ‘view from Kabul’ or the national level processes that result in local governance interventions. It examines how these programmes and different interventions were formulated, negotiated, designed and operationalised at the national level. The chapter specifically explores the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the emergence of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) as a sub-national governance institution as two major processes that influenced the way local governance programme interventions are carried out. It highlights the agency exercised by domestic actors in these processes and questions the notion that governance programmes are typically imported blueprint models that are solely formulated by international experts. By looking at the processes of negotiations and interactions that took place between different international and national actors, the chapter demonstrates the influence of a varying range of seemingly extraneous interests and objectives including changes in international donors’ policies, national elections and changes in the positions of national elites.

Chapters six and seven provide extensive case studies on the effects of the local governance programme interventions in the particular contexts of selected districts and villages in Nangarhar and Bamyan provinces.

Chapter six introduces Nangarhar Province as one of two research sites where the two local governance programme interventions were implemented. It examines how the MRRD and IDLG’s village and district governance interventions were received by the local population of the village of Qala-e-Janani Khan in the district of Behsud. The chapter first provides the historical background to the political economy of governance relations in Nangarhar and highlights how its geopolitical and strategic location has affected its governance relations within the province and with the central government.

By exploring interactions between internationally sponsored governance programmes, the chapter demonstrates the hybrid arrangements that emerged as a result of these encounters. It then introduces the village's and district's socio-political and economic characteristics and critically examines the MRRD programme interventions in these sites from their introduction to implementation, including how their gender conditionality was introduced and responded to in practice. This is followed by an examination of the IDLG's local governance interventions and how they were received by and benefited village and district elites and the general population.

Chapter seven focuses on Bamyan and highlights the differences between this province and Nangarhar, especially in terms of its history of local governance and turbulent relations with the Afghan state. I first provide a historical overview of governance interventions in Bamyan, looking at the socio-economic and political factors that have shaped Bamyan governance relations historically and how they have evolved in the post-2001 context. I then introduce the political economy of governance relations in the district of Yakawlang and the two chosen villages to set the scene for the examination of the MRRD and IDLG's interventions. The chapter moves on to examine different phases of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) implementation, including how the village elites responded to gender conditionality and the way in which women in the selected villages of Katakhan and Akhund used this to strengthen their role in local governance relations. The chapter then assesses both the MRRD and IDLG interventions at district level.

Finally, **chapter eight** concludes the thesis by first presenting a brief overall summary of the chapters and then summarizes the key findings in relation to the research questions. It concludes by outlining the broader theoretical implications of this study in the field of local governance in conflict-affected settings and identifying the limits of the research and areas for further research and investigation.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Debates on Liberal Peace-Building, State-Building and Local Governance

2.1. Introduction

This chapter engages with the broader literature on conflict, intervention and governance, with a view to providing a theoretical framework for studying local governance programme interventions in Afghanistan. It first looks critically at the literature on liberal peace-building and 'good governance' in order to understand the declared goals and underlying logic of international actors' efforts to build and promote local governance in conflict-affected settings. It then draws upon critiques of this literature, inspired largely by a historical political economy approach. It is argued that in the study of local governance interventions, the most convincing approach is to combine alternative peace-building frameworks such as hybridity and ethnographies of aid with a historical political economy approach which focuses on governance as an empirical reality rather than an ideal type model, as well as on power relations and material interests in particular contexts and times.

The chapter is divided into six sections including the introduction. In the second section, I introduce key terms and concepts. In section three, I focus on the logics and rationales for intervention through state-building and institution building by liberal democracies. I outline debates on the security development nexus, state-building, good governance and gender relations. This then leads to a discussion of the World Bank's Community Driven Development (CDD) as a model of local governance programme interventions. The section follows critiques of liberal perspectives on governance and critically engages with literature on alternative approaches such as hybridity and ethnography of aid. In section four, I elaborate on historical political economy approaches and concepts such as patron-client relations and the study of (neo)patrimonial systems of rule and will expand on its links with hybridity. I will then elaborate on linkages between patriarchy and patronage-based systems, and finally this section will conclude by expanding on literature about political settlements and elite coalitions. In section five, I will summarise a proposed theoretical framework for this thesis. Section six will provide a summary of the chapter.

2.2. Defining key terms

In this section, I define the key terms used in this thesis; governance, 'good governance', local governance and public authority.

Governance has become central to the mainstream development discourse over the past two decades. Governance has been defined in broad terms as "the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised" (Kaufmann et al. 2002:4). This definition covers both state and non state sources of authority, an examination of which reveals who has power, who makes decisions and how other players make their voices heard. Borzel and Risse further define governance as "the various institutionalised modes of social coordination to produce and implement collectively binding rules, or to provide collective goods" (Borzel and Risse 2010:114,116 cited in Goodhand 2014:2). This consists of structure and process; governance *structure* refers to its component institutions and actors, while governance *process* refers to the coordination between actors in rule-making and the provision of collective goods (*ibid.*). As noted, governance is not solely exercised by the state and one can distinguish between the state, competitive systems (markets) and networks (where interests are negotiated) (*ibid.*). Although the state can have a central role, as Borzel and Risse note, other organisations may replace the state when its presence is limited or contested as, for example, in war-time. Hence, governance operates with or without the presence of formal state administration (*ibid.*). However, they argue, 'a shadow of hierarchy' exists with the state using its power to explicitly or implicitly impose rules or laws over non-state actors for public, as opposed to self, interest (*ibid.*).

Good governance The World Bank defines governance as a "way in which power is exercised in the management of the economic and social resources of a country, notably with a view to development" (Agere 2000:3). The UNDP identifies various desirable dimensions of governance, which include it being participatory, transparent and accountable, as well as effective and equitable and supportive of the rule of law (United Nations 2006). Similarly Hirst (2000) and Munshi (2004) define 'good governance' as a model of governance that promotes the rights of individual citizens and the public interest, creates an effective framework that is able to ensure stable regimes, rule of law, efficient state administrations and a strong civil society that is independent of the state (Hirst 2000; Munshi 2004:4 cited in UN 2006:4). Following the World Bank, other international institutions began to pick up on the term 'good governance' and it became a defining principle for all kinds of development

interventions (UN 2006); one example discussed later is the gender conditionalities of the World Bank and UNDP in Afghanistan.

Local governance refers to a set of institutions, mechanisms and processes by which people at the local level negotiate their interests and needs, mediate their differences and exercise their rights and obligations at the local level (Lutz and Linder 2004:16). It involves the distribution of resources shaped by underlying power relations and collective norms in a given territorial setting whether it is a community, a village or a collectivity of villages.⁵ Local governance is heavily shaped by local elites who are also connected to socio-political structures and processes beyond their local settings (de Waal 2009). As mentioned earlier, governance involves actors in addition to, or other than, formal government institutions. I use **public authority** to mean the exercise of authority by local governance actors for multiple purposes including protection from external threats, managing external relations, peaceful resolution of internal conflicts, and playing a gatekeeping role in the provision of resources and collective goods and services (IDS 2010:9).

2.3. A liberal approach to the study of local governance interventions

2.3.1. Liberal peace-building, 'fragile' states and the security-development nexus

In this study, governance interventions are examined in the context of a broader post-Cold War shift towards liberal interventionism manifest in numerous 'peace operations' including the former Yugoslavia (1991), Bosnia (1992-1995), Kosovo (1998-1999), East Timor (1974-1999), Sierra Leone (1991-2002), Haiti (1994-1995), Côte d'Ivoire (2002-2004 and 2010-11), DRC (1998-2003), Burundi (1993-2005), Iraq (2003-2011), Afghanistan (2001-present) and, most recently, in Libya (2011).⁶ Whilst these interventions varied in character, not least in their legality, all involved wide-ranging efforts to transform the conflict-affected countries through reforms of the state, institution-building, women's rights, civil society and the promotion of a free market economy. These interventions were often justified in terms of 'protecting' the population, promoting democracy and human rights, etc. The growing focus on governance is reflected in increased funding, with OECD governments providing over US\$10 billion a year for governance interventions globally (IDS 2010).

⁵ Some use the term 'local governance' to explain a much broader spectrum that consists of overall sub-national governance relations or any form of governance beyond the centre.

⁶ It has to be noted that each of these conflicts have their own characteristics. I have not included the Syrian war here because the UN Security Council's proposal for direct intervention was vetoed by China and Russia in February 2012.

As Richmond points out, liberal peace-building has historical roots that precede the end of the Cold War. Contemporary debates on the liberal peace resonate with Augustinian thinking on 'tranquillity of order' (Saint Augustine 1991 cited in Richmond 2005:3) and Hobbesian thinking about containing the state of nature.⁷ However, central to contemporary liberal peace-building is the idea that sustainable peace can be achieved through the simultaneous pursuit of conflict resolution, market sovereignty and liberal democracy (Pugh and Cooper 2004).

Although the entrance of 'good governance' to the development discourse preceded the multi-mandate peace operations of the mid to late 1990s, over time there was a growing convergence between peace-building, state-building and 'good governance'. State-building and 'good governance' converged under the institutional umbrella of the United Nations in the form of the 'New York Consensus'.⁸ State-building was seen as the antidote to 'fragile' and 'failing' states which were viewed as disordered, chaotic, tribal, primitive, violent and exclusionary (Orford 2003:43 cited in O'Reilly 2012:535). These various pathologies created an imperative for Western states to intervene in order to stabilise and modernise 'fragile' and 'failing' states. Therefore, intervention was legitimised on the basis of changing the socio-political and economic conditions in the target countries (*ibid.*). This was done through introducing different reform measures and programmatic interventions that aimed to build institutions and effect behavioural change.

This convergence between peace-building, development and 'good governance' has been characterised as a security-development nexus (Duffield 2007). State-building is seen as a project through which wealthy Western states deal with emergent security threats from 'under-developed' or 'poor' countries (Kalher 2009:287) and state-building support to those countries is justified as an investment in the security interests of wealthy countries (Scott 2007). Hakimi (2011) characterises post-Cold War exogenous state-building as: "... a deeply conscious, overtly ambitious, internationally conceived, externally financed and highly regulated enterprise to reconstruct states in the aftermath of conflict in developing countries" (Hakimi 2011). Post 9/11, the war on terror has resulted in a harder, more militarised edge to international peacekeeping. In the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq, for instance, according to counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine, building 'good governance' is a crucial element in the battle for hearts and

⁷ For an interesting discussion of such tensions see Gabriella Slomp (1996) cited in Richmond (2005:3).

⁸ According to Kahler (2009:298) the New York Consensus incorporated democratisation and respect for human rights as compulsory elements of liberal state-building that has been part of the liberal democracies' foreign policy for a long time.

minds (Fitzsimmons 2013:1-2). As discussed in later chapters, though international actors may invoke 'good governance', their actual practices on the ground may be responsible for promoting 'bad governance'.

The ostensible goal of peace-building operations is to provide security, establish rule of law, ensure effective delivery of goods and services through a functional formal state and thus create political legitimacy (Brinkerhoff 2007 cited in Fritz and Menocal 2007). The building of central government authority through the centralisation of the means of legitimate coercion is meant to increase the state's surveillance of unruly borderlands. Given that these interventions happen in conflict settings, additional components and norms are added such as 'peace-building', conflict resolution, security sector reform and so on. Linked to these programmes are particular rules and conditionalities associated with conflict, democratisation, state reform, corruption, gender and so forth.

2.3.2. State-building and 'good governance'

State-building and the promotion of good governance and democratisation have become central to the project of liberal peace-building. Heathershaw, for example, describes democratisation as the 'discursive cousin' of the liberal peace, as each share the same ontological and epistemological roots and have become defining features of international engagement with states in the post-Soviet and post-colonial era (Heathershaw 2008:599). Developed Western democracies provide the reference point for state-building. Ghani and Lockhart argue that failing states can be 'fixed' by building core functional capacities (Ghani and Lockhart 2008). Capacity building projects are meant to build the formal institutions of the state so that governance systems and structures are brought into line with the Weberian model.

'Good governance' initiatives have the common objectives of tackling corruption, establishing a vibrant market economy, enabling governance reforms and supporting democracy (Khan 2004:4). An underlying assumption is that the promotion of 'good governance' leads to institutional structures that "prevent the emergence of rents and associated rent-seeking activities" (*ibid.*).

The state, in these terms, is viewed as a transferable set of institutions and procedures, independent of history and context. There are several problems with this view. First, this highly reductionist and functionalist view of the state, is blind to what Abram (1988) calls the 'idea of the state' – that the state is not to be sought as a 'thing', but rather 'a claim' or 'a message of domination' that can only be understood based on its moralities, principles and practices of government affairs (Abrams 1988:81 cited in Li

2005:385).⁹ Second, the 'good governance' agenda is ahistorical – state-building is seen to be a planned, conscious process that can be designed, whereas historically the process of state-formation was an imminent, unplanned process with unforeseen outcomes that involved conflicts, negotiations and bargaining. Third, the liberal approach with its institutional template, fails to engage with the complexity of institutions which North et al. understand as “patterns of interaction that govern and constrain the relationships among individuals” (North et al. 2009:58). Institutions are shaped by formal and written rules, laws and regulations as well as by informal sets of norms and shared beliefs and world views used as ‘means’ to enforce their rules over those under their leadership (*ibid.*). Liberal institution-building tied to a Weberian worldview often overlooks existing structures based on customary social norms and unwritten rules.

2.3.3. Gender, state-building and governance

Following the definition of good governance given in the earlier section of this chapter, one of the core principles of the 'good governance' model is equity or ensuring that men and women benefit equally from resources and authority. In this section, I look at different logics that underlie liberal interventionism with regard to gender relations and how it becomes a conditionality for institution building and programmatic interventions.

There is a significant gap in the study of the gendered and gendering nature of state-building and governance in the context of conflict affected settings (Scott 2007; O'Reilly 2012). According to Handrahan, there is need to further explore the complex ways in which masculinities and femininities continue to be “(re)constructed, (re)produced and maintained in relation to other forms of identity” (Handrahan 2004, cited in O'Reilly 2012:530). O'Reilly points out that relations between gender and liberal interventionism are mutually constitutive and reinforcing and that gender identities are seen as an “enabling condition of liberal interventionism and vice versa” (O'Reilly 2012:538-9). Studying the Bosnian and Balkan conflicts, O'Reilly looked at how notions of femininity and actual/potential vulnerability justified and bolstered “hegemonic masculinity” (*ibid.*). The idea that women in developing countries are oppressed and need protecting is part of the underlying logic and justification for liberal interventionism (Kandiyoti 2005). Kandiyoti, drawing on feminist scholars, shows how women's rights and participation have become an iconic characteristic of liberal interventionism. Kandiyoti, like Abu-

⁹ Tania Murray Li points out that state needs to be seen as a 'claim' or “a message of domination - an ideological artefact attributing unity, morality and independence to the disunited, amoral and dependent working of the practice of government” (Abrams 1988:81 cited in Li 2005:385).

Lughod, argues that Western interventions are justified by supporting women in Muslim countries (*ibid.*). This has been coined as ‘feminism as imperialism’ or a continuity of colonial meddling (Kandiyoti 2005:1; Abu-Lughod 2002). Kandiyoti also refers to Arat-Koc’s findings that connect women’s oppression to cultural and religious practices which, on the one hand was seen as justifying ‘humanitarian war’ or an obligation to ‘protect’ women and, on the other, highlighting the limits of the intervention in bringing about real change (Arat-Koc 2002, cited in Kandiyoti 2005:1). Whether gender conditionalities in broader governance or local governance interventions have been effective or not, the rhetoric of women’s rights and the moral obligation to save and support them has been integrated in the majority of the policies, programmes and projects that are sponsored by intervening forces.

Most international donor institutions see gender equality as an important element of the good or effective governance model. For instance, the World Bank Group states in its publications that it has been promoting gender equality in development since 1977 (World Bank 2014b). For the Bank, social development, gender and inclusion are part of its core conditionalities. The Bank has made specific ‘corporate commitments’ that obligates the institution to support all poor countries that are recipients of its funds in this regard (*ibid.*). The Bank helps these countries by incorporating gender into their country strategy (creating a ‘vision’), helps diagnosing ‘key gender issues’ (identifying problems) and then proposes programme interventions that can overcome these issues (World Bank 2012). Some have criticised the Bank for not including gender equality as a fundamental concern of ‘good governance’ (UNRISD 2004:182). The critique highlights the failure to develop gender-specific capacity across all public institutions that require reformation such as the civil service, judiciary and broader public sector.

Although on paper such approaches appear smooth and regulated, the way each recipient country deals with this is a complex process with different factors involved. The Bank’s purpose in the above example of helping ‘poor’ countries on gender equality, could be interpreted as a form of transnational governance where it aims to contribute to expanding a liberal form of democracy with its core elements such as democratisation, social inclusion and protection of human rights in exchange for provision of resources. The recipient country’s responses may be shaped less by its agreement with the values and principles underlying gender conditionality, than its desire to secure the material and financial resources that the Bank provides.

While the declared purpose or rationale for women’s inclusion in socio-political and economic spheres has been based on the logic that improving gender equity will lead

to economic growth (Kandiyoti 2007b:514), as this thesis will demonstrate, the patronage-based political dynamics characteristic of countries subject to liberal interventions, takes this logic to a different direction (*ibid.*). Using illustrations from Afghanistan and Iraq, Kandiyoti points out that technocratic approach to gender programming that is blind to these political dynamics, frequently has unintended or perverse effects, leading to aid dependency and limited political gains for women (*ibid.*).

2.3.4. State-building, governance and power

State-building, institution-building and governance are the product of underlying power relations and material interests. As Ottaway and Lieven argue, in war to peace transitions, outcomes are generally shaped by raw coercive power rather than by externally created formal organisations (Ottaway and Lieven 2002). Michael Mann makes a distinction between two forms of state power: despotic power and infrastructural power (Mann 1986:169-170). Despotic power, according to Mann, “refers to the capacity to coerce and rule without reference to subjects or groups in civil society” and infrastructural power is defined as “the capacity to actually penetrate society and to implement logistically political decisions” (*ibid.*:170). The notion of infrastructural power resonates to some extent with Foucault’s concept of biopower. Tania Murray Li, for example, draws upon the Foucauldian notion of governmentality to examine and understand interventionism. In her book *The Will to Improve* (2007) she notes that development schemes in Indonesia can be understood as a biopolitical project aiming to foster the wellbeing and welfare of the population. Development is inseparable from the will to govern which involves “men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with...wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with all its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc; men in their relation to...customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc; and lastly, men in their relation to...accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc (Foucault 1991a:93, cited in Li 2007:6).

Foucault’s notion of governmentality enables us to understand and analyse how governments set certain conditions and rules aiming to “improve the welfare of the population” (*ibid.*). Li points out governments often aim to shape human conduct through calculated means (*ibid.*:275). These calculated means are not necessarily solely based on coercion, as it would be impossible to force every individual to follow rules that are set by governments (*ibid.*). Li also points out that interventions are not developed ‘once and for all’ but are continually open to change and adaption. The

agents of development are rarely monolithic, often consisting of 'heterogeneous assemblages' that include "forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscriptions, techniques and so forth"(Rose 1999:52).¹⁰ Hence, in the context of liberal interventionism, these heterogeneous assemblages include, for instance, diplomats, military instructors, government officials, development experts, aid workers, local elders, warlords, etc., each one representing a constituency and based on the interest of their constituency, they follow the rules and take action in the process of interventions.

Although Foucault's work focuses more on the actions of governments, it can also be applied to the way different international institutions operate globally. According to Duffield (2005), Chandler (2009) and others, liberal interventionism can be understood as a form of 'bio-politics' aiming to discipline and control the behaviour of unruly populations on the global periphery. This is not to argue that 'sovereign power' or traditional geopolitics disappears from the picture. As seen in many interventions, geo-strategic and military interests may be prioritised over liberalisation or the two may, in fact, go hand in hand (Kelly 2009). Kegley and Hermann (1995) observe that Niccolò Machiavelli in 1513 and, three centuries later, Immanuel Kant in 1795 wrote of 'illiberal imperialism,' explaining how the forces of liberal states or 'republican governments' use non-liberal ways to intervene in other countries due to foreign policy interests (Kegley and Hermann 1995:2).¹¹

2.3.5. The World Bank's Community Driven Development example

Two common features of externally promoted democratisation/good governance programmes have been decentralisation and participation. These emerged as key tenets of state reform programmes in the 1990s and have increasingly merged with promotion of governance and conflict reduction in 'fragile' states. Therefore 'the local terrain' and state-society relations have become a growing focus for both development workers and peace-builders. The Community Driven Development (CDD) initiative by the World Bank can be seen as one such example of a local governance intervention.

¹⁰ See also Foucault (1980:194), cited in Li (2007:6).

¹¹ "Immanuel Kant recognised in 1795: the republican forms of government might be prone to practice illiberal methods to achieve their foreign policy goals, and that this impulse might undermine the prospects for democratic peace to prevail" (Kegley and Hermann 1995:2).

Community Driven Development is one of the World Bank's major components of assistance to various developing and under-developed countries (Barron 2010). In the mid-1990s the World Bank started to take the CDD approach as a "mechanism for development and investment lending in various development organisations" (ADB 2006:1). According to an Asian Development Bank (ADB) review, the CDD is "an umbrella term encompassing a wide range of projects that actively include beneficiaries in their design, management, and implementation" (ADB 2006:5). The World Bank defines CDD as "a development approach that gives control over planning decisions and investment resources to community groups and local governments" (Dongier et al. 2003). In exchange for the provision of resources such as block-grants, communities are expected to accept the rules, regulations and conditionalities introduced by the CDD intervention. Conditionalities here include local participation and contribution to projects and, most importantly, inclusion of women in the programmes. The key expectations from CDD interventions are: 1) enhanced 'sustainability'; 2) improved 'efficiency and effectiveness'; 3) 'poverty reduction'; 4) more 'inclusive' development; 5) 'empowerment' of poor people, and building social capital, 6) strengthened governance; and 7) complementarity of market and public sector activities (Dongier et al. 2003: 13-14; ADB 2006:6; van Domelen 2007; Baird et. al. 2009; Binswanger-Mkhize et al. 2010).

Although CDD is not solely designed for conflict-affected countries, over the last two decades the approach has been increasingly deployed in such contexts (World Bank 2005; World Bank 2006; Barron 2010; World Development Report 2011). According to Wong (2012:iv), the World Bank supported over 400 CDD projects in 94 countries to the tune of over \$30 billion by 2005.¹² A World Bank paper indicates that CDD holds 'dual platforms', one 'addressing community needs' and another as an 'instrument' for 'empowerment', especially in war-affected environments where physical and social structures have either 'collapsed' or their 'capacity is minimal' (World Bank 2005:1). This point also indicates the World Bank's role in supporting countries 'transitioning from conflict' is on the rise (*ibid.*). Additionally the Bank's lending increased from two to ten per cent between 1989 and 2003, confirming that CDD is indeed is an important 'instrument' for the Bank (*ibid.*).

¹² The World Bank (2005) stated that there were 86 active CDD projects in conflict-affected areas by 2005. The increase in the number of projects within so few years could also be seen as an indicator for the popularity of funding these projects, despite the problematic measurement of success.

Li (2005) undertook an extensive study of a CDD intervention in Indonesia that operates under the Kecamatan Development Program (KDP). She elaborates on how this scheme is operationalised: building village infrastructure, allocating funds for each village and making proposals individually for each village or at sub-district level. She points out how these small projects are usually conventional (roads, bridges, irrigation, etc.) and do not lead to community disagreement. She adds that 'social experts',¹³ have worked on mapping every single stage or step of project planning for on-going 'fine-tuning' (Li 2005:384). For villagers, as she points out, access to funds comes in exchange for changing their behaviour as prescribed by the World Bank's programme (*ibid.*). Li argues that the World Bank logic was to build institutions on top of a "clean slate not just physically but socially constructing a new society in which the delinquent structures of the old order would not intrude" (Li 2006:1). Barron et al. on the other hand, see the KDP in more positive terms, as an attempt to support the development of a legitimate and effective mechanism for resource allocation that also encourages the broader process of democratic institutional reform (Barron et al. 2011:xi). According to Barron et al. this programme is not necessarily designed for conflict resolution purposes, but it does provide a venue to examine relations between the development programme and local conflicts (*ibid.*). They point out that KDP contributed positively to the reconfiguration of citizen-state relations at the local level in many cases (*ibid.*).

Epistemological understanding of the CDD approach

The CDD approach is based on the concept of Community Development (CD) which has its own historical background and roots in the developed as well as the developing world. There are different approaches to community development, but most focus on some form of bottom-up community development in which different methods are used to enable the local population to analyse and identify their problems and decide their needs and priorities. Paulo Freire's (1970) model emphasizes the importance of allowing the local population to be self-reliant and promoting bottom-up approaches. His *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, influenced by Marxist thought, provided an extensive class analysis in which he highlighted the importance of participating and uniting for a common cause and, more specifically, by elaborating the relations between 'the coloniser' and the 'colonised' he provided a framework that later became the inspiration for participatory development across countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Freire 1970; Mansuri and Rao 2004).

¹³ Li defines 'social experts' as anthropologists who have carried out an ethnographic study of the villages and their power relations.

The Indian cooperative movement and Gandhi's notion of village self-reliance and small-scale development that emerged as forms of resistance against colonial rule and the effects of modernisation are another example of community development work. Sinha elaborates on the origins of community development work and various types of interventions in India, which influenced later versions of CD such as the World Bank's CDD (Sinha 2008). However, in the process, the radical philosophies of Freire and Gandhi disappeared. In the World Bank's hands participation became a formal and technical process, steered by central governments and international institutions (Kothari 2001).

The focus on local communities is not new, and goes back at least as far as the colonial period, particularly the late nineteenth century (Sinha 2008). Sinha, for instance, argues that a 'development regime' emerged in the early 20th century in India. This regime merged "institutional expertise, and state power imperatives"¹⁴ and, it is argued, there remain strong continuities between the colonial, post-colonial and liberal development regimes (*ibid.*:59).

Sinha contends that right from the early days, in rural development policy the colonial authorities were only one of many actors, which included nationalists and American philanthropists who all pursued different sets of interests (*ibid.*). Therefore Sinha's analysis shows a complex amalgam of 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' initiatives and actors in which community development was co-produced and negotiated.

CDD as conflict prevention 'tool'

A World Bank paper emphasises that CDD is a 'mechanism for preventing the emergence of violence' (World Bank 2006), hence not only does CDD focus on conflict-affected countries in general, but its approach can be considered a conflict prevention tool (Cliffe et al. 2003; Barron 2010). The experiences of Indonesia and later, East Timor, present two different contexts in which CDD programmes were applied. While in Indonesia CDD was used to dilute or decentralise the power of a strong centralised government, in East Timor the CDD intervention opened space for 'social-construction' of a 'new society' (Barron 2010), meaning the CDD intervention was used not only to disburse resources but also to build new institutions or rules by excluding village chiefs from decision-making roles in projects (Barron 2010:23). These two models were

¹⁴ Ludden defines a 'development regime' as being an 'institutional configuration of effective power over human behaviour, that also has legitimate authority to make decisions that affect the wealth and well-being of whole populations. (...) a development regime includes institutions of education, research, media, technology, science and intellectual influence that constitute a development policy mainstream' (Ludden 2005: 4042, cited in Sinha 2008:59).

popularized in the early 2000s, leading the Bank and its donors to replicate them in many other countries including Afghanistan where the model was adapted as explored in later chapters.

In East Timor, as Cliffe et al. point out, CDD was used as a ‘tool’ for building ‘new’ local governance institutions (Cliffe et al. 2003). Similar to the Indonesian experience, in East Timor the CDD intervention was framed as a Community Empowerment Project (CEP) and the implementation process included formation of village councils which acted as ‘program agents’ for the population and then ‘elected’ male and female representatives to the sub-district councils to ‘prioritise’ community needs and, based on that, prepare proposals for funding. In East Timor, the programme also added a condition that no ex-Indonesian or traditional leaders or heads of resistance structures could be elected as heads of these councils (*ibid.*:8). In the language of the programme’s designers, given that the overall intervention was about ‘state-building’ and ‘institution building’, conditionalities were placed on who could participate in the leadership of the councils. Barron’s review of the World Bank’s CDD experiences in ‘conflict-affected’ and ‘post-conflict’ areas of the East Asia and Pacific region indicates that while donors in such areas often develop separate projects for security, development and economic recovery, the CDD approach was ‘different’, seeking to use one intervention to address all three at the local level (Barron 2010:15). In one example that Barron highlighted, it was claimed that the CDD contributed to resolving security issues as well as development and economic recovery. Although Barron concludes that the CDD is “no ‘magic bullet’ response to conflict” (*ibid.*:28), his review points out that the CDD projects did contribute to poverty reduction, building ‘social cohesion’ and ‘strengthening local institutions’ (*ibid.*).

2.3.6. Critiques of the Liberal approach

As outlined above, liberal notions of ‘good governance’ are based upon a one-size-fits-all model of Weberian institution-building. This is the desired end-state and societies which depart from the model are seen to be deficient and require ameliorative measures. The liberal approach has been described as a problem solving approach in the sense that the model is taken as a given and the problem to be solved is one of finding the best institution-building solution to reach this goal. State-building is about expanding the state’s authority and presence by building up a legal rational bureaucracy. Liberal peace-building therefore is a highly normative and ambitiously transformative endeavour. However in practice its prescriptive recipes, in many cases,

did not work effectively, leading to a growing critique and efforts to fix, revise or find alternatives to this approach.

The liberal response to the poor track record of exogenous state-building has been to attempt to refine the approach, rather than questioning its fundamental assumptions. Reformist measures have included Roland Paris' argument that peace-builders should attempt institutionalisation before liberalisation (IBL) since rapid democratisation or liberalisation of the economy in a transitional context, where state institutions are weak and unable to deal with the distributional conflicts and tensions that liberalisation creates, runs the risk of bringing about a return to open warfare (Paris 2006). Others argue conversely that the problem is that reforms are not sufficiently rapid and far-reaching – they have been too timid and have failed to remove or neutralise reform resistant elites and institutions (Collier and Hoeffler 2004).

Second, the realist response has been to argue for more modest and limited ambitions in post-war contexts. Donors should be satisfied with 'good enough' governance (Aguirre and van der Borgh 2010), and peace-building should focus on 'stabilisation first', which, by its nature, will be an elite-driven and highly pragmatic process (*ibid.*). The key argument for this approach is that it is impossible for external actors to change the behaviour of political elites which is rooted in the needs, experiences and histories of non-Western societies and polities (Roberts 2009).

Third, critical international relations theorists drawing on Foucault expose the underlying workings of power in liberal peace-building. Interventions, they claim, are linked to neo-imperialist logics and intentions or to a biopolitical order (Mallaby 2002; Etzioni 2004; Paris 2006). Mark Duffield argues that the need for intervention is generated by the way in which global economic systems subordinate the status of war affected societies (Duffield 2007). The implications of this position are the need to intervene less, in addition to rather vague calls for a new 'solidarity of the governed' (*ibid.* 232-234).

2.3.7. Alternatives to the Liberal approach

Hybridity and Peace-building

Linked to some of the above-noted critiques has been a growing body of scholarship that has attempted to grapple in more complex and nuanced ways with the workings and effects of liberal interventionism and development programming on the ground. This work challenges some of the sweeping critiques as well as the more positive assessments of liberal peace-building. One strand of this body of research has been a

growing focus on the 'informal', 'traditional' or 'illiberal' forms of governance that may exist in the shadow of, or sometimes in opposition to, the state (MacGinty and Williams 2009; MacGinty 2010, 2011). Such analysts have advanced the notion of "hybrid political orders" as both an analytical and prescriptive framework. This approach encourages international strategies to "focus on local realities, local institutions, local knowledge and local agency" (Aguirre and van der Borgh 2010: para 14). It emphasizes communitarian ideas of local ownership, cultural sensitivity, local participation, social service provision and protection (Pugh et al. 2009:394-395; Richmond 2009). MacGinty and Williams point out that different aspects of the liberal peace can be deeply illiberal as they promote a highly specialised form of liberalism that is often highly prescriptive and reflective of western norms (MacGinty and Williams 2009:5). For many, building peace means questioning the myth of "enduring state sovereignty" and accepting weak state boundaries, the legitimacy of non state formations and learning to live with "the reality of statelessness" (Aguirre and van der Borgh 2010: para. 15). MacGinty argues that the concept of hybridity is not about grafting together the two separate entities of 'local' and 'global' in order to create a third category. Rather it assumes that actors, norms and practises are the result of prior hybridisation (MacGinty 2011:211). MacGinty's analysis of hybridity provides an alternative approach to studying the liberal peace in the sense that it acknowledges, (and to an extent valorises) local actors' agency and their different forms of resistance. It therefore provides a useful lens for exploring 'actually existing' peace-building and its complexities on the ground. However, Mallett (2010) points to the difference between looking at hybrid political order as an analytical tool to understand 'post-conflict' contexts and as a practical tool for engagement in peace-building and suggests that institutionalising the concept of hybridity uncritically will result in short-sighted and risky outcomes. He argues that "overcoming a romanticisation of the 'local' and recognising the often adverse motives and actions of ostensibly auspicious local actors are requisite for both robust analysis and good politics" (Mallett 2010:67).

Ethnographies of Aid

In parallel with the work on hybridity in the context of liberal peace-building, there has also been a growth in a related body of research on ethnographies of aid. This research focuses on the discursive practices and process of aid and development assistance drawing on ethnographic methods (Crewe and Harrison 1998; Mosse 2005; Lewis and Mosse 2006). The power of ethnographic description and analysis lies in its unpacking of socio-political relations, brokership and translation in particular settings at particular moments of time. This work examines how interventions are received,

understood and interpreted by different actors at multiple levels (Mosse 2005:8). Scholars looking at the ethnography of development and aid rightly challenge the notion that interventions are about duped perpetrators (or the powerful Western development institutions) and the victims who are caught up in a “space-age juggernaut on auto-pilot” (Sivaramakrishnan and Agrawal 2003 [draft], cited in Mosse 2005:6). The new ethnography of development, according to Mosse, questions “monolithic notions of dominance, resistance, hegemonic relations and the implications of false consciousness among the developed (or the developers)” (*ibid.*).

In the following section I will further expand upon how these perspectives, combined with a political economy approach can provide a more convincing framework for studying local governance relations in patrimonial societies.

2.4. A political economy approach to studying local governance

The critiques and particularly the alternative views on the critiques of liberal peace interventions begin to take us towards a serious engagement with governance as an empirical reality rather than an abstract, ideal-type model. Concepts and frameworks broadly inspired by a historical political economy approach are particularly relevant. The political economy approach contends that the economy or the structures of production and patterns of economic activity, cannot be understood without looking at political interests, the organisation and balance of power and social relationships (Cramer and Goodhand 2014). A political economy approach “[...] reveals the workings of power not only through visible coercion that is direct in its effects but also in material basis of relationships that govern the distribution and use of resources, benefits, privileges, and authority within the home and society at large.”(True 2012:7) Following this approach will enable us to understand the internal dynamics and sources of power in a society. The historical aspect of the political economy approach helps advance an understanding of how and why certain individuals, groups or classes have more power than others, and how these power relations change over time (*ibid.*). By following this approach, I will look into local power relations and the role of men and women of different socio-political and economic status in society with regard to local governance practices in particular.

In the following section I elaborate upon the various literatures that deal with governance from a broadly political economy perspective. These ideas and concepts will subsequently be drawn upon when studying local governance in Afghanistan.

2.4.1. Understanding patrimonialism and patron-client relations

Local governance interventions by central governments and international donors do not take place on a blank slate, but in a context where there are pre-existing institutions and governance practices. Patron-client relations and the patronage based system of rule have been common in most Asian regions as well as in other parts of the world (Scott 1972*b*; Schmidt et al. 1977; Gellner and Waterbury 1977; Eisenstadt and Roniger 1984; Erdmann and Engel 2007; Ilkhamov 2007; Guistozzi 2011). Patronage-based systems of rule are thought to have preceded the emergence of modern nation states. Erdmann and Engel write that under colonial regimes, 'traditional' forms of domination were prevalent, and the modern or 'legal-rational' sphere of domination was limited to colonial capitals. Hence, relations between the majority of people and the ruling power beyond the colonial capitals were all based on patrimonial rule (Erdmann and Engel 2007). Under this system of rule, the less privileged commit themselves to 'patrons' to secure their access to resources such as land, jobs, wealth, physical protection or direct assistance, particularly in times of scarcity or high need (Scott 1972*a*:9). Beekers and van Gool characterize patrimonial relations as "reciprocal political exchange between actors commanding unequal resources" (Lemarchand and Legg 1972:151, cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012:6). In this system 'patrons', who are considered as high-status individuals, provide resources and physical protection to 'clients' or people who are considered as lower-status. The clients repay their patrons by offering their loyalty, labour or political support (Beekers and van Gool 2012:6).

Scott posits three different characteristics of patron-client relations: 1) imbalance of exchange, where patrons provide types of services that clients are unable to access otherwise; 2) face to face interactions that result in building personal relations that go beyond tribal, blood or other links between the two; and 3) diffuse flexibility, in which the link between the patron and client is very flexible and mutually dependent, and the nature of the exchange builds strong and fluid relations as opposed to explicit contractual relationships (Scott 1972*b*:93-95). In Scott's view, relations between patrons and their clients are not solely coercive, but rather both participants have other choices open to them. There is reciprocity, meaning the patron provides services to the client and the client maintains loyalty to patrons. In some cases, clients seek services from more than one patron and there are circumstances where clients coerce patrons to provide services (*ibid.*).

Therefore patronage systems are frequently viewed as 'traditional' and 'indigenous', relics of a pre-state era. Scott characterises patrimonial relations as a 'moral economy'

where “the irreducible minimum terms the peasant/client traditionally demands (‘expects’ is perhaps more appropriate) for his deference are physical security and a subsistence livelihood” (Scott 1976, 1977a:22 cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012:6). In diverse historical political cultures of different parts of the world, including West Africa, Southeast Asia and Southern Europe, the legitimacy of power is more based on whether those in positions of power share their wealth with the less resourceful to a satisfactory level or not, than on equality of wealth between the two (Guyer 1997:228; Scott 1977a:22; Pitt-Rivers 1971:61-3, cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012).

Referring to non-state or informal structures in local settings as ‘traditional’ or ‘tribal’ is challenged by David Sneath in his book *The Headless State: Aristocratic Orders, Kinship Society, and Misrepresentations of Nomadic Inner Asia*. He first challenges the notion that clan oriented organisations preceded the state, arguing they were an “*ipso facto* creation of the state, which were then in turn maintained by these new elites throughout the creation of sophisticated genealogies” (Sneath 2007:152). Sneath argues that blood and kinship based clans and tribes, as commonly discussed, have never actually existed among, for instance, the Mongols (*ibid.*). He suggests that using terms such as ‘tribal’ or ‘clan’ to explain local power structures is problematic. Local or indigenous power structures are, according to Sneath, aristocratic orders that have different technologies of power associated with the state, such as taxation, military power, territorialisation, etc. They lack only bureaucratic power (Elverskog 2009). Consequently, as an aristocratic order holds all the different features of a modern state with the exception of central bureaucratic authority, he calls it ‘headless’. A parallel could be drawn with Afghanistan, where popular accounts of tribal and clan based traditions, ignore the fact that tribal structures have been shaped by their interaction with the state.

Clientelism emerges as a result of the patrimonial system of rule. Kaufman points out that while clientelism takes different shapes in different contexts, it manifests three particular traits: 1) society is divided between persons with unequal power and status; 2) there are reciprocal relations between patrons and clients that are self-regulating and inter-personal and their maintenance often depends on the level of returns that each actor expects from the other; and 3) the relationship is highly personalised and based on person to person or group interests that are, at best, perhaps loosely in accordance with public laws and societal norms (Kaufman 1974:285, cited in Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002:3). Under clientelism the economic dependency of clients on their patrons is of primary significance while other aspects of the relations between them such as kinship, social, etc. are only secondary (Brinkerhoff and

Goldsmith 2002:2-3). As Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith put it, it is a form of 'instrumental friendship', though not a balanced one, as patrons often choose to focus on the poor and take advantage of their lack of or limited information and autonomy.¹⁵ The most important point to keep in mind is that patrimonialism evolves and takes new shapes as a result of changes in societies, and may continue to exist even when it appears to have vanished (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002:38).

In sum, what we learn from studying local governance relations through a patrimonial lens is that the absence of formal government institutions does not necessarily mean a Hobbesian 'state of nature', but rather that in regions across Africa, Latin America, Southern Europe and Asia the social contract is organised around patron-client relations where the populations have specific forms of relations in which the distribution of resources is conducted by 'patrons' or a group of persons or elites who have access to resources and higher status, to 'clients' who are less privileged and considered lower status.

2.4.2. Neopatrimonialism and hybridity

In the earlier section (2.3.7) I introduced hybridity, as an alternative approach for studying liberal peace-building interventions. I have also highlighted some of its limits. In this section I further develop the concept of neopatrimonialism and hybridity in the context of liberal peace-building in patrimonial societies.

Neopatrimonialism refers to a patrimonial system of rule that is combined with rule-based or legal rational bureaucratic administration or the formal state in a broader sense. Under a neopatrimonial system there can be a relatively functional state and democratic structures, but the relations between actors and these structures are based on patronage rather than merit or institutional channels. Therefore there is a 'dual political system' where patrimonial political and economic relations exist in parallel to modern bureaucratic systems (Cammack 2007:600, cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012:12). Neopatrimonial systems of rule are shaped by personalised political relations and networks which, in Reno's words, may constitute a 'shadow state' (Reno 2000) that leaves the formal government institutions like 'an empty shell' (Ferguson 2006:9 cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012:12).

Under patrimonial rule distinctions between public and private interests are intentionally kept vague and official public posts are given to people as personal favours. In

¹⁵ See section 2.4.3 for further elaboration on the monetisation of relations under neopatrimonial relations.

exchange for material rewards, clients mobilise political support for their patrons (Beekers and van Gool 2012). According to Khan, one of the key characteristics of the neopatrimonial state is the personalisation of power, based on modern forms of exchange between patrons and clients, where clients provide political support in exchange for their patron's payoff with provision of resources, jobs and security (Khan 2005).

Neopatrimonialism, as Beekers and van Gool point out, is a modern phenomenon as it is linked with the rise of the organisation of modern states that is incorporated in the broader modern international system (Médard 1982:179; Budd 2004:2, cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012:12). Historically, neopatrimonial systems emerged as a result of the formation of modern state institutions introduced by colonial authorities. For example, Beekers and van Gool discuss the case of Nigeria, where pre-colonial political systems, characterised by competition between chiefs (or patrons) who were the main resource distributors to their dependants (clients), maintained this in the process of colonial sponsored state-building. Under the colonial system, these chiefs became dependant on clients and clients became dependant on the colonial government.

One of the key characteristics of neo-patrimonialism, is its adaptability, shown by its existence in almost any kind of polity from multi-party, to civilian, military, capitalist or socialist, authoritarian or democratic (Médard 1982:184, cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012: 17-18). According to Médard, patrons and brokers in clientalist networks need particular skills and capacities: "a skilful leader *has to learn* how to reconcile his own search for booty and spoils with the redistribution of those [state] resources necessary to get political support and strengthen his position" (Médard 1982: 167, cited in and emphasis by Beekers and van Gool 2012:13). Modern bureaucracies require skills that perhaps a traditional patron, particularly in geographically bounded agricultural economies, would not have. Hence these newly founded political relations can result in the emergence of a new type of leader that is literate, educated, more 'urban' and bureaucratically competent. The neopatron's power base is not solely his patronage network, but his skills and abilities to 'navigate the bureaucratic maze', or understand how elections work and 'get things done' in the 'modern institutions' of government (Brass 1966; De Zwart 1994, cited in Beekers and Van Gool 2012:13). One manifestation of the agility and adaptability of neo-patrimonial networks is the sudden change in physical appearance of men in Afghanistan who had formerly operated as more traditional patrons (as khans, warlords or strongmen). These leaders shaved off

or trimmed their beards and wore western suits to look more 'modern', whilst still maintaining their positions of power as governors, ministers, vice presidents, etc.¹⁶

Therefore elites exploit niches and spaces between the formal and informal systems; rather than trying to reform or build the formal system; they benefit from its seeming disfunctionality and lack of transparency (Beekers and van Gool 2012). Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith point out that "the state exists to serve the rulers, not the ruled" (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002:8). As the examples from Liberia and Sierra Leone demonstrate, neopatrimonial rulers could turn the state into a private commercial syndicate (Reno 2007, cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012). Robert Wade, in his study of Indian canal irrigation systems, shows how officials bribed their way into lucrative posts and, once there, used their power to extract rents in order to earn back their investments, as well as pay upwards to protect their positions and satisfy their superiors. This system often operates in a way that it 'trickles up' with rents going to officials at a higher level (Wade 1982, cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012).

As Khan points out, interventions to install new institutions and reconfigure socio-political relations in local settings seldom result in the establishment of legal-rational bureaucratic institutions or, for that matter, 'good governance' (Khan 2005). Instead, the whole process can be captured by elites and patronage networks who become key recipients of these interventions and resources. Local elites play an important brokering and gatekeeping role, ensuring their and their client's interests are maximised by maintaining their control over resources and ensuring that intervening actors do not bypass them to get direct access to their local clients.¹⁷ According to Barzilai-Nahon, the power of gatekeepers often arises from their skill and ability to preserve the status quo by resisting measures that change the political environment against their interests (Barzilai-Nahon 2008:23-4). But brokers do not merely respond to circumstances, following the normative scripts introduced by intervening forces; they are active agents who play a role in (re)shaping the environments in which they function (Bierschenk et al. 2002, cited in Lewis and Mosse 2006:11). As the development regime is composed of an amalgam of different actors and institutions, there are always opportunities for brokerage between these different actors.

Khan notes that in advanced countries power distribution, resources and incomes are shaped and enforced by formal institutions (Khan 2010). But in developing countries

¹⁶ See the following chapters for further elaboration and examples on this point.

¹⁷ For further illustration of this point refer to **chapters six** and **seven** where empirical examples from the field are provided.

the distribution of power is derived from organisational abilities that may not be based on the capitalist sector or formal institutions. He contends that this is linked to the way colonial rule operated in these contexts (Migdal 1988; Boone 1994; Reno 1995; Mamdani 1996). The legacy of indirect rule during colonial times in Africa, for instance, resulted in decentralised legal administrative institutions, which empowered local chiefs and left the central state weak and ineffective (Reno 1995). As a result, informal institutions such as patrimonial governance and patron-client relations became crucial in the distribution of resources and power (Khan 2010). Khan further posits that there is a strong interdependency between formal and informal institutions in developing countries.

Patrimonial systems of rule create friction and conflict during processes of democratisation as the opening up of the political system challenges vested interests and established rent seeking opportunities. For instance during elections, competition between rival groups based on patron-client networks often results in further control and power for one patron who may hijack election procedures. Goodhand points out that attempts to introduce open competition such as elections can result in an outbreak of violence as it may force the renegotiation of the distribution of rents (Goodhand 2014:4). Similarly, governance reforms related to institutionalisation, bureaucratisation and transparency work against the underlying interests of patronage based forms of governance (*ibid.*). However, Khan argues, this does not mean that patronage based government is necessarily anti-reform and anti-developmental – in some situations elite coalitions may emerge that promote economic growth, poverty reduction and channelling of resources, for instance when patrons support export-led industrialisation (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2002:38-9).

As Beekers and van Gool point out, 'ordinary people', particularly those who are not part of a strong patron-client network, experience a considerable level of insecurity under this system. Coping strategies are deployed to deal with this instability, including strengthening cliental ties with patrons through bribery and exchange of votes (particularly during elections), racketeering and banditry, public protests, etc. (Beekers and van Gool 2012:18). They highlight the importance of direct engagement with neopatrimonial politics in order to deal with day to day problems, in conditions of resource scarcity and where the powerless have few or no choices but to ally themselves with one group or another to survive and get access to resources (*ibid.*:24-25).

According to Erdmann and Engel, the key difference between patrimonial and neopatrimonial rule is that in the latter, patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic institutions co-exist and are co-productive. Under the neopatrimonial system, the exercise of power is unpredictable and unstable and though lip service may be paid to legal-rational procedures, social practices are often personal and informal (Erdmann and Engel 2007:114). Furthermore, it is argued that although neopatrimonialism involves some redistribution of resources, it lacks the moral standing of traditional patron-client relationships (Beekers and van Gool 2012). Under neopatrimonialism, the state becomes the main vehicle of accumulation and patron-client relations are monetised – they are tied together through financial flows rather than kinship relations, and this, as well as their transnational dimensions, makes them, according to (de Waal 2009), far less stable. Neopatrons only indirectly depend on villagers and city dwellers.

And the overall notion of exchange as a principle in patron-client relations is replaced by extraction, where the neopatron relies on clients when in need of political support, but in return is not systematically accountable if he does not deliver (*ibid.*:17).

In Afghanistan, for instance, the neopatrimonial networks that emerged in war time were central to the ‘combat economy’ but also to the coping and shadow economies that enabled people to survive and accumulate during this period (Goodhand 2005).

2.4.3. Patriarchy and (neo)patrimonialism

In the earlier sections of this chapter, I elaborated on the aspirational goals of ‘good governance’ which include participation, transparency, accountability and an equitable form of governance as its core principles.¹⁸ Yet in developing countries, the ability to control violence and accumulate and distribute resources is the key governance capacity that matters (Khan 2010); hence, any action that restricts political elites’ ability to do this will be resisted or subverted by them. Examining and, indeed, changing gender relations in societies under a patrimonial system of rule requires first an understanding of how gender relations or the different roles that men and women play in the society work. Charrad describes the linkage between patriarchy and patrimonial rule as follows:

The connections of patriarchalism as authority expressed in the household over the kinship group and the structure of rule over a larger population have far-reaching implications. They mean that family arrangements and symbols are

¹⁸ See sections 2.2 and 2.3.3 of this chapter.

extended into the public sphere and that the patrimonial ruler 'owns' his subjects as he does his wife and his children. (Charrad 2011:52)

Charrad's explanation of the gendered dimensions of patrimonial rule draws upon Weber's description of patrimonialism as a "special case of patriarchal domination-domestic authority decentralised through assignment of land and sometimes of equipment to sons of the house or other dependents" (Weber 1922/1978:1011, cited in Charrad 2011:52), although she also points out that Weber does not resolve whether patriarchalism constitutes the ingredients of patrimonial rule or if patrimonial rule can be exercised without patriarchalism (*ibid.*). In developing countries, patrimonialism is in part about controlling violence and the distribution of resources. Often women are used as a form of currency to strengthen political coalitions or resolve disputes and conflicts between rival groups through bartering them in marriage. Such practices limit women's individual agency, however, there are also examples where women have exercised agency within the limited spaces at their disposal (Tapper 1991:21-23).

Under a neopatrimonial regime, the monetisation of economic relations discussed earlier also has implications for gender relations. Customary ties, kinship and shared values do not entirely disappear but, with the change in the currency or the 'economy of affection' that is replaced by the power of money, there is also change in social relations. In the words of Hyden (1983) the 'economy of affection',¹⁹ or the social ties and obligations that were in place under a traditional form of patrimonial relations, has been replaced by this new form of relations that is entirely monetised. Kandiyoti considers how the years of war, particularly the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, have transformed 'traditional' forms of social control where decisions about women's dress and mobility and relations between men and women which were previously under household, kinship group and community elders' domains in terms of social control, were mandated by decree and enforced by groups of armed young men representing the state, or Taliban regime (Kandiyoti 2005:10). Kandiyoti argues that this approach not only oppressed women, but potentially also disempowered the non-Taliban men by "robbing them of their prerogatives" (*ibid.*). Kandiyoti's example reflects the social aspect of the changes that are linked to the political economy of war and how externally funded factions were able to rule the population and change the social norms.

¹⁹ Hyden (1983) refers to peasant societies in eastern Africa where the relations between the peasants and landlords were mainly based on network of interactions, communications and support among structurally defined groups that were connected by blood, kin, community or religion (Hyden 1983:8).

Protracted conflict has affected gender relations in other ways. For example, war-induced migration forced families to flee to urban centres in Iran and Pakistan. People's mobility and migration resulted in them gaining access to modern and secular education that in turn, has changed men's as well as women's views about the position of women in society and their public role. Hence patriarchy under (neo)patrimonialism should not be seen as static, but rather a phenomenon that is constantly changing, both reflecting and generating broader societal shifts.

2.4.4. Political Settlements and elite coalitions

Studying and analysing the balance of power between different groups and classes, and the formation and evolution of institutions has been part of historical political economy since Marx (Moore 1966, cited in Di John and Putzel 2009). Historical political economy explains transitions from one to another mode of production, for instance from feudal systems to capitalism. More recently, discussions on political settlements have re-emerged in historical political economy discourse. Khan describes political settlements as "a combination of power and institutions that is mutually compatible and also sustainable in terms of economic and political viability" (Khan 1995, 2000, 2010:4). According to Parks and Cole, the key elements of a political settlement include actors and their interests that are reflected in the way they shape or re-shape institutions to sustain formal or informal political settlements (Parks and Cole 2010:6). Khan also highlights important differences between political settlements in developed or capitalist systems and developing countries. In developing countries revenues and sources of support for formal institutions are either external (e.g. foreign aid) or via patron-client relations (Khan 2010).

Jones et al. focus their attention on the 'informal' dynamics between political actors, especially 'elites', with a specific focus on "formal re-negotiations of political arrangements" through deals on power sharing, constitutional conferences, peace deals and so on (Jones et al. 2012). Parks and Cole introduce secondary political settlements as "the arrangements among powerful local elites to control political competition and governance below the national level" (Parks and Cole 2010:18). Secondary political settlements are linked to the way local governance relations are settled and negotiated between local elites and the state or other relevant actors and institutions.

Here, it is important to draw on Di John and Putzel's definition of 'elites':

Elites are defined as: a) those in possession of valued assets in agriculture, manufacturing, services (main capitalists); b) those who wield substantial power of adjudication over the distribution and allocation of property rights (traditional chiefs, landlords, regional political leaders); c) those who possess authority to bargain on behalf of rural communities or organised religious communities (traditional leaders, religious leaders); d) those who lead political party organisations. (Di John and Putzel 2009:15)

Di John and Putzel (2009) argue that states emerge as a result of coalitions of 'elites', and their 'bargains' are often about the allocation of rents. They argue that bargains can take different shapes in order to maintain the interests of elites, for example, protecting a landowner, supporting existing capitalists or creating new capitalist groups. In short, the aim is to maintain support for elite groups and their loyalty.

In conflict-affected settings, military commanders or strongmen who gain their legitimacy through their control of violence become central to the elite bargain.²⁰ In many contexts the outcomes of 'elite bargains' are not always positive and productive. For instance, in a case study from Zambia, Lindemann points out that while 'inclusive elite bargains' may bring peace for a temporary period or avoid a civil war, they do not contribute much to economic development or a sustainable peace (Lindemann 2011).

2.5. Local Governance Interventions: An Alternative Theoretical Framework

As demonstrated in this chapter, there are various theoretical debates on the nature of liberal interventions in conflict-affected settings. Critiques of liberal peacebuilding come from different theoretical and political standpoints. None have a monopoly of explanatory powers.

Alternative frameworks such as hybridity and ethnographies of aid, provide a more promising approach to studying such interventions in particular contexts. It is proposed here to draw upon these alternative approaches which provide a more 'bottom up' perspective, and to meld them with political economy approaches that will expose underlying power relations and material interests. It is hoped that such an approach will enable a more insightful exploration of questions related to power and agency, institutions and patriarchy in the contexts of local governance interventions in Afghanistan.

²⁰ The following chapters in this thesis further elaborate on examples of elites in Afghanistan.

Therefore I have attempted to develop a theoretical framework based upon 'systematic eclecticism' that combines historical political economy complemented with a hybridity lens and ethnography of aid in order to expand our knowledge of the study of power relations, and governance interventions that evolve as result of liberal interventions in particular time and places.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the broader theoretical framework for the thesis by engaging with two inter-related bodies of literature that provided an analytical lens for the study of local governance in Afghanistan. These included literature on liberal peace-building and on historical political economy. The chapter, after defining terms, explored the literature on liberal peace-building, institution building and 'good governance' and community driven development. This literature looks at governance in highly stylized and normative terms. It is a model that can be transferred wholesale and is imbued with all sorts of positive values and dimensions – it promotes participation, accountability, broad-based development, citizen's choice, conflict prevention and so forth. I have argued that this view of governance bears very little relation to actually existing governance in developing countries, nor does it accurately reflect the interventions of international actors themselves, who frequently depart from the norms and values they purportedly promote. I pointed out that depending on time and context, the evidence available shows us that liberal peace-building and interventionism can be as much about bio-politics or changing the socio-political relations, norms and behaviours of people as it can be about geopolitics where the interest of liberal states can determine which aspect to prioritise.

In the second half of the chapter I turned to historical political economy approaches where I provided a set of concepts and frameworks far more relevant and analytically convincing, particularly in relation to the context I am studying. Historical political economy is understood as an approach that enables us to explain how power operates through the material basis of relationships that govern the distribution of resources, privilege, benefits and authority, not only through coercion and its direct effects, but also through meeting people's needs. The chapter introduced patrimonial and neopatrimonial lenses for the study of existing governance relations in the socio-political context of developing countries that are affected by conflict and interventions.

I argued war, conflicts, mobility of people, migration and, above all, monetisation of these socio-economic relations due to the aforementioned factors change the nature of patrimonial society, not simply to a liberal society, but a far more complex form of

relations that emerges as a result of liberal interventionism in these contexts. The chapter discussed the relations between patriarchy as a system of thinking in (neo)patrimonial systems by assessing the underlying logics used by ruling men who limit women's access to public space.

The chapter argued that external financial, political and military dependency is an important factor in defining elites in the sites of interventions. Hence, patron-client relations need to be seen in the much broader context of interventionism and its implications for local governance relations. I aim, in subsequent empirical chapters, to apply a collection of these frameworks to studying local governance programmes in Afghanistan.

Chapter Three

Methodological Approaches to the Study of Local Governance

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I explain my research design and methodological choices and the challenges I faced during the field research. My methodological choices were shaped by the scope and nature of this study and the theoretical framework presented in chapter two. Rather than treating international actors, the central government and local elites and populations as discrete categories, I was more interested in the blurred boundaries between these groups and their complex interactions. The purpose of this research is to study the reciprocal relations between them in different site(s) of intervention. These sites were Kabul (to understand the broader national level processes of designing, justifying and negotiating local governance interventions) and districts and villages in Nangarhar and Bamyan (where specific Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) programmes were applied and implemented. In order to analyse and understand the rationales and backgrounds of intervening forces and local actors I followed an ethnographic approach and used the extended case method, drawing upon ethnographic techniques, for empirical data collection. However, I was not able to spend lengthy periods of time in the same locality because of cultural and security concerns that are elaborated upon further below.

This chapter is divided into seven sections including the introduction. In section two, I describe my position in the research as an ‘insider/outsider’ and discuss the implications this position had for my entry into the field sites and engagement with informants. In section three, I expand upon the research questions that were introduced in chapter one; in section four, I elaborate on the methodological approaches employed to investigate local governance relations; section five introduces the extended case study as a methodological approach that helped the course of this study, the research methods and criteria for selection of field sites. Section six highlights the ethical and security challenges of conducting research in a conflict-affected setting and section seven summarises the methodological approach adopted for this study.

3.2. My position as an ‘insider/outsider’ researcher

In the study of development interventions, there is an important distinction to be made between the positioning of evaluators and critical researchers (Mosse 2005:2; Li 2007:2; Monsutti 2012). I would position myself as a ‘critical insider’ who does not study local governance interventions to prescribe a normative recipe for changing or

replicating such interventions in other contexts. Rather, my study aims to provide a broader and more in-depth analysis of the different dynamics surrounding governance interventions, and how they influence local histories and power relations in particular settings. In other words, my aim is not to 'assess' these interventions or judge them as a 'success' or 'failure'. As Mosse (2005) points out, 'success' and 'failure' are both "policy-oriented judgements that obscure project effects" (Mosse 2005:11). Mosse further draws upon Apthorpe's observation that "even if projects fail as practice they may nonetheless succeed as code or policy argument in the wider arena" (Apthorpe 1997:4, cited in Mosse 2005:11). Hence, my aim in this study is more directed towards what Norman Long deems the production of 'knowledge for understanding' (Long 1992:4). By bringing my field experiences and empirical data into this thesis, I intend to contribute to the broader understanding of local governance relations in the context of international interventionism (Mosse 2005:11).

The 'insider'/'outsider' dilemmas

As ethnographic research involves dealing with people, their daily lives, the way they think and share their stories, it is critical to consider ethical issues while carrying out the research. However, as O'Reilly (2005) indicates, ethical concerns should not result in avoiding research on difficult subjects, but should encourage reflectivity and self awareness on the part of the researcher (O'Reilly 2005:60). For instance, given that this research project took place in a conflict-affected context, it was crucial to ensure the safety and security of informants and interviewees as well as myself. I ensured the confidentiality of research subjects in general, particularly in instances where I felt not mentioning their names could protect them. I explained the purpose of the research to each informant prior to all interviews and sought their consent, mostly verbally where, prior to interview, they agreed with me to use the information they provided in my research. Respecting cultural and customary norms in each community is a very important aspect of conducting field research in any setting, particularly in rural and remote areas. I made sure that I followed these norms in a respectful manner during the research. In all of my field research in the two provinces (Nangarhar and Bamyān) I avoided carrying a smart phone or voice recorder and (in some cases) a camera as I realised carrying these could lead to 1) attracting more attention to my presence in the villages that could potentially include some security risks and 2) making people who were not comfortable being recorded feel uneasy.²¹ In some instances, informants asked me not to use a particular story or event in my research as a condition of their

²¹ In Nangarhar it was especially not common and I was told it is to do with the fear informants had from the pro-Soviet era where government spies would use small tape-recorders to record interviewee voices and then the interviewees would find themselves in prison.

sharing it, which I followed and respected. I did not take many pictures during the field research, as I was sensitive to local populations' feeling exploited by visiting outsiders who took lots of pictures from the field, without returning to give anything back to the community.²²

I acknowledge my position as an 'insider' in studying my own society. However, as Bartunek and Loius (1996) point out, although I am considered an 'insider' relative to expatriate researchers who study Afghanistan, the villagers with whom I interacted considered me an 'outsider' because I did not necessarily have shared kinship, ethnic or religious identities with any of them (Bartunek and Louis 1996:12). For instance, Nangarhar is my native province, but I come from a different tribe and district from the village I studied, which for the most part has a reputation for politically opposing the regimes that my extended family participated in. This was not a conscious decision, but I learnt about it as I carried out the research. In Bamyan, I was a Pashtun²³ (by ethnicity), Sunni (by religion) woman carrying out research in predominantly Shiia Hazara and Sadaat communities. Nevertheless, in both contexts, as an internationally educated Afghan woman who was interested in studying her own country, I was considered in the words of Abu-Lughod to be 'a dutiful daughter', who was mostly welcomed, respected and trusted. However, at times, I was also challenged and confronted for being an independent woman travelling alone (Abu-Lughod 1988). This certainly brought a different quality of knowledge from the field in comparison to that of a complete 'outsider', nevertheless, I acknowledge bias as inevitable and also the importance of valuing balance and avoiding bias as far as possible (Aguilar 1981:22, cited in Ellen 1984:130).

As part of my previous job I carried out programmatic and policy reviews and policy advocacy. This background clearly had an impact on this study. In the course of the past decade, I have often identified myself as a development practitioner and later as a 'civil society activist'. In the four years of my PhD research, I have tried to distance myself from the 'activist' role in order to see things more critically and look at my own work and role from a distance. I leave the judgement on how successful I have been in this to the reader. Consequently, on the one hand this thesis is written from the perspective of a native activist, while on the other, I have taken a critical approach by

²² This understanding is mainly based on my years of experience as a development practitioner working in refugee and rural communities.

²³ This part of my identity is visible in my first name, even if by principle I chose not to share my ethnic background with people.

trying to explore questions that were not considered 'appropriate' in either of my previous roles as a development practitioner or as a 'civil society activist'.

3.3. Research Questions

The research questions are organised as follows: First, there is a broader question, then four sub-questions. I used sets of guiding questions for each of the four sub-questions during interviews with informants.²⁴

The broader research question is:

How have local governance programmes and policies been designed and implemented in Afghanistan and what effects have they had on local power structures?

Below are four sub-questions and a set of guiding questions for each sub-question:

1) What were the underlying rationales and interests behind the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) interventions and how was this reflected in their design and planning at the national level?

1.1. What processes resulted in the formulation and design of the MRRD's National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and IDLG's establishment as an Independent Directorate of Local Governance?

1.2. How was the gender dimension of the intervention made part of both the NSP and IDLG's Sub-National Governance Policy and how was this dimension negotiated with local actors?

1.3. How did the shifting agendas of international donors and national government re-shape their engagements with local actors?

2) How were the MRRD's NSP and IDLG interventions, including their gender conditionality, received by elites and the wider population of women and men at local level?

2.1. Who were the key actors or elites at the local (village and district) level and how were they more influential than others in terms of 'representing' the rest of the population or being elected as Community Development Council (CDC) members?

²⁴ Annex one presents examples of key informant questions and semi-structured questions used during interviews.

- 2.2. *How was the NSP introduced and the CDC established in local villages and who participated in the process of CDC formation and overall NSP implementation in the village(s)?*
- 2.3. *How did village elites and the CDC leadership deal with NSP conditions such as the overall criteria for NSP standards, gender, participation etc.?*
- 2.4. *What forces at the village level influenced decisions over conditionalities? (For instance, what role do different actors such as khans, maliks, mullahs, NGOs, commanders, political leaders, etc. play in this?)*
- 2.5. *What was the role of the qaryadar, how do villagers become qaryadars and what does the process of registering a qaryadar involve?*

3) What effects did these interventions have on local governance and power relations, and how, if at all, did they differ from those intended by the programme planners and implementers?

- 3.1. *What role did the CDC leadership play in the overall governance of a village? To what extent could the CDC leadership be separated from actual or 'customary' village leadership?*
- 3.2. *After completion of NSP implementation, were CDCs still active in attracting resources to their villages, or did they dissolve once the block-grants had been spent?*
- 3.3. *How has the creation of CDCs affected existing power relations, local leadership and local elites' relations with the state at district level and beyond?*

4) How does this research relate to and contribute to wider theoretical and policy debates on the efficacy and desirability of local governance programme interventions in conflict-affected contexts?

- 4.1. *What are the merits and limitations of the literatures on liberal peace-building and the political economy of state-building and what insights do they provide in relation to local governance programmes in conflict-affected settings?*
- 4.2. *To what extent have writers attempted to bridge the gap between these two literatures and approaches and does this provide a convincing lens for studying local governance programmes?*

3.4. Methodological approaches to investigating local governance

A historical political economy approach provides the theoretical framework for investigating local governance interventions in this thesis. Methodologically, this approach is operationalized through multi-sited ethnography in order to study local

governance programmatic interventions in more than one location (Falzon 2009:1-2). Shore and Wright point out that the study of programmes and policies are crucial in understanding how they influence and (re)shape society in different ways (Shore and Wright 1997). In the study of a nationwide programme and policy for building modern governance institutions, ethnographic accounts of the formulation process and implementation on the ground, when joined with the accounts and narratives of the recipients of these interventions, will help us respond to the key question of this thesis: *How have local governance programmes and policies been designed and implemented in Afghanistan and what effects have they had on local power structures?*

This study was influenced by Long and Long's 'actor-oriented' approach which emphasises the agency of individuals whilst also recognising the constraints of the wider environment in which they operate (Long and Long 1992, Long, N. 2001). Long pointed out that actions are never solely about the individual, but rather take place within a network of relations (Long, N. 2001:49-50), shaped by organising practices that are bound by social conventions, values and power relations (*ibid.*). A qualitative approach, that involves tracing and analysing the processes of negotiations and interactions, is required to understand power relations and their on-going changes and reconfigurations in the course of interventions. Focusing on a specific setting at a particular moment in time enables a more precise form of analysis of the power dynamics that shape and reshape the overall nature of local governance relations.

Mosse (2005) provides an extensive discussion of two different approaches to studying programmes and policies: the instrumental and the critical approach. The instrumental approach mainly takes a 'problem-solving' perspective and seeks to improve the way in which development is conducted. Meanwhile, the critical approach looks at policy as a 'rationalising technical discourse' that conceals the dominating bureaucratic power's 'hidden purposes' (Mosse 2005:2). He argues that neither of the two views reflects the complexity and contingency of policy development and the relationship between the policy/programme and practice (*ibid.*:2-3). Similarly, Shore and Wright have pointed out that the key is to capture the interactions and/or disjunction between various sites or levels involved in the processes of development programme and policy implementation (Shore and Wright 1997:14). Therefore, they suggest 'studying through', which means "tracing ways in which power creates webs and relations between actors, institutions and discourses across time and space" (*ibid.*). This approach entails multi-sited ethnographies that enable us to look at the way broader intervention logics and

rationales are translated into policies and connected with the everyday practices of governance in a given context through implementation of the programme interventions.

It is important to note here that gender is an important aspect of this research. Methodologically, instead of separating out the question of gender relations and how they are affected by the process of local governance interventions, I have integrated this question into the overall study and looked at it in a broader way.

In sum, investigating and studying local governance interventions requires a qualitative and multi-sited ethnographic approach that allows us to follow the events that shape and rationalise these interventions and their result in changing local power dynamics and governance relations. Thus, these methodological choices are, indeed, in line with my research in which I have taken a historical political economy approach to studying local governance programme and policy interventions.

3.5. Research Design

3.5.1 Extended Case Method as research method

This study mainly takes an ethnographic approach. Drawing on Burawoy's work, I see ethnography as an action in which the researcher writes about the world through participant observation (Burawoy 1998:6). Moreover, I use the extended case method as a methodological framework to study local governance interventions and how they change local governance relations in a given time and context. The extended case method is an open-ended form of method first developed in the 1950s-1960s by Max Gluckman and his students at the 'Manchester School' (Gluckman 1958; Van Velsion 1960; Burawoy 1998). The key point of this method is its openness, allowing the researcher to engage with "what natives actually were doing" rather than what they ought to do (Burawoy 1998:5). In other words, it focuses on practices, and takes these practices as an entry point to understand power relations that both enable and constrain people's actions. The method enables the researcher to learn about *changes* that are taking place in the society that he or she is studying. Norms are understood not as internalised and then executed, but as a field of competing interests (Burawoy 1991:278). As Burawoy points out, the extended case method has the ability to "dig beneath the political binaries" such as the local and central and the coloniser and colonised (Burawoy 1998:6).

In the study of local governance interventions I used multi-sited ethnography, following and gathering data on a set of processes and the interpretation of the processes in different geographical locations. The extended case method enabled me to follow

processes (governance interventions) across time and location looking at people's practices, their inter-relations and their understanding and interpretation of these events. Like Burawoy, I found this method relevant because of the diversity in the nature of actors participating at multiple levels in local governance interventions (Burawoy 1998; Van Binsbergen 2006).

Moreover, this method enabled me to open up the scope of the study, to look at the everyday practices of governance in *situ*, as well as observing policy making processes at the national level. The method's ability to capture change and to go beyond binaries was useful as I intended to provide a perspective on subjects of intervention who have agency and at the same time highlight the shifts or changes in local governance relations that occurred as a result of war, conflict, mobility and migration. In contrast to some earlier work, where scholars used the metaphor of a 'mud-curtain' separating the villagers or 'the local' from outsiders (Dupree 1973),²⁵ the use of this method enabled me to focus on the inter-relations between the local recipients of the governance programme interventions and the intervening forces that include central government and its international sponsors.

I used various research methods for data collection such as semi-structured interviews, participant observation, a number of focus group discussions, key informant interviews²⁶ and open-ended conversations with individuals and groups at the national level in Kabul and, in the two provinces, Nangarhar's Behsud district headquarters and Qala-e-Janan Khan village and Bamyan's Yakawlang district headquarters and the (administratively merged for the purposes of the CDC) villages of Katakhana and Akhundun. The selection of the three locations depended very much on security and safety, the willingness of persons/institutions/organisations to facilitate the first introduction and, more importantly, the willingness of the local population and members of the local village councils to participate in the research. I sought formal permission in cases of meeting local government authorities, whereas for meeting local villagers, I mainly relied on their own consensus to take part in the research as informants.

The time frame for this study was the post-2001 context (2001-2012)²⁷; however a pre-2001 historical context of local governance interventions and local governance relations in the broader Afghanistan context is provided. For specific histories of the villages, however, I mainly relied on local informants' narratives.

²⁵ Also see **chapter four** 4.3 for more on this.

²⁶ In the following section 3.5.2, I elaborate further on these methods.

²⁷ This thesis was completed in September, 2014, hence some of the additional analysis through secondary sources and my observations from this period are also included.

3.5.2. Selection of Research methods

Semi-structured interview: This was the main form of interview technique used. I used semi-structured interviews to interview 110 informants (91 male and 19 female) in all three locations. These included men and women at the village level, district officials (mostly men), provincial officials and national level informants. I had a list of prioritised questions but only used them in accordance with the informant's consent about what he/she was willing to share and how much time he/she was able to spend answering questions. The advantage of the semi-structured format was that it allowed the informant freedom to provide (in some instances) information about the broader context. At the same time, it did not always elicit the specific data that I was looking for. I mitigated that with the help of the key informant's format, where more specific questions were asked (see Annex One).

Participant observation and observation notes: As mentioned before, I added brief observation notes for each interview explaining the context in which the interview was conducted and any relevant background notes on the informant. I also attended some social events and formal gatherings at national and local levels and wrote observation notes about what had been discussed; these observation notes became part of my primary sources for analysis in the empirical chapters in this thesis (see Annex One for examples).

Key informant interviews: The key informant interviews were lengthier and more detailed interviews conducted with two categories of people. The first was national level actors with senior authority over the process of formulation, design and execution of local governance interventions. These involved senior or mid-level government officials, national development practitioners and some international experts. In Kabul I conducted five key informant interviews in total (four male and one female). The second was actors in the villages and districts who were directly involved in overall village governance and/or in the process of Community Development Council (CDC) formation. In total in both Nangarhar and Bamyan I conducted fourteen key informant interviews (eight male and six female) (see Annex One)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): I used this method when I had an opportunity to gather more than two informants in a place to discuss some key questions related to the socio-political context of selected site(s). Only one focus group was recorded; notes were taken in the others. Focus groups were usually same-sex, although on one occasion, in Bamyan city, I had an opportunity to have a mixed group of men and

women members of one council. In total I had four focus group discussions; two women, one men and one mixed group.

Using these different methods together was helpful as it provided an opportunity to triangulate information received from different sources. I made a point of repeat interviewing most of the key informants, once at the first visits and another time in one of my last visits to the site. The focus group discussions had interesting dynamics; in Bamyan for instance, bringing women from both villages together for the FGD was helpful in showing the role of the female leader and her authority as a representative of women.²⁸

Although I had well-established connections with various Afghan NGOs active in the field sites in Nangarhar and Bamyan, I did not rely solely on this network for information and recommendations. I also searched for academic and other contacts; for instance, I contacted a distant relative who teaches at Nangarhar University to advise me on the selection of field sites and other matters. I preferred non-NGO contacts as a point of entry, mainly in order to distance myself from my previous role as an aid-worker-seen-as-service-provider on the ground. Nevertheless, my background as a development practitioner and my wide range of contacts was extremely useful in conducting this study. Since the specific target sites in the country were not places I had interacted with directly before, knowing people and organisations who were able to assist me at the entry point was very helpful. Also, at a national level, the senior officials in IDLG and MRRD provincial/district departments changed rapidly. Most of the key actors I was seeking to (re)establish contact with were no longer in their posts. In some ways this was an advantage, as they seemed to be more generous with their time and willing to provide more 'forthright' responses to my questions. However, the responses of key national actors very much depended on their future plans. For instance, one informant who, I was told, was hoping to return to government in a senior advisory capacity, was much less open in his responses than another who had a private business and no immediate intentions to return to a governmental post.

The actors and informants interviewed for this study were diverse in terms of their positions, authority and socio-political and economic status. I distinguish between actors and informants because not all informants were directly involved in the events and processes that I was examining through this research. Similarly, there needs to be a distinction made between actors and elites. I use the latter term only to define those

²⁸ Unfortunately, I was not able to bring men in Bamyan together as it was working season and they were not available to gather at the same time.

in the highest authority positions based on their socio-political and economic status. One important contribution of this study is its diversity of informants; perspectives on local governance have been collected from a broad range of people, from a farmer in a village to a very senior government official.

My familiarity with the context and security conditions resulted in an efficient and (mostly) successful plan that enabled me to visit the field sites in accordance with my initial plans. One originally planned site (Herat) had to be abandoned due to travel security concerns in the district (Ghoryan); this did not affect my field study in any significant way. I was mostly based in Kabul and made five trips to Nangarhar and three visits to Bamyan province during the field research period, spending between five to ten days at each.

My identity as a female Afghan national was both a strength and a weakness. My strengths were that I had no language barriers, and long-standing experience working in Kabul as well as in the two provinces. As a woman conducting research, I enjoyed the advantages of having access to both men and women in all the fieldwork locations. At the same time being a 'local' and a woman could also be a weakness or a challenge. For instance, I found some of the informants in government offices less cooperative than in my previous experiences of accompanying expatriate researchers. Their willingness to share information with an expatriate researcher could be seen as the price of potentially accessing resources, whereas as a national researcher with student status, I could not promise them anything in return. Also as an independent woman, travel and mobility, especially staying overnight in some of the local sites, was the most significant challenge I faced. I mitigated this challenge by staying in the cities most of time and by spending very few nights with the families in or near the selected village sites. As spending longer periods of time in the selected areas could have had security risks, instead I arranged shorter, but repeated visits. I was also aware of, and took precautions against the danger of over-reliance on the people/organisations who arranged my initial introductions – that this could put me in a position of bias at times. For instance, in Nangarhar, only the initial introductions were made by my guide. Similarly, in Bamyan, a local NGO staff member introduced me to one of the village elders, but did not accompany me to subsequent meetings.

3.5.3. Selection of the Field Sites

I selected two districts and, within them, three villages; the village of Qala-e-Janar Khan, Behsud District, Nangarhar Province and the villages of Katakhan and Akhund, Yakawlang District, Bamyan Province. The reason for two villages rather

than one in Bamyan was because these two villages had officially 'merged' in order to form one Community Development Council. Given the fact that the study focuses on local governance interventions, national level politics around the decisions and operationalisation of interventions was important, hence Kabul's inclusion as a field site where the focus was solely on studying national level institutions and actors and their role on local governance interventions. The two provinces, Nangarhar and Bamyan, were selected as site(s) of interventions or where the effects of MRRD and IDLG's interventions were to be examined.

There are a number of studies on local politics and local governance in Afghanistan carried out by researchers who used quantitative and qualitative methods and selected a wide range of sites. I, instead, preferred to limit the number of sites and go deeper into the analysis of the context and power dynamics in these settings. This approach undoubtedly has its strengths and weaknesses. The weakness is that in no way or form, can these two fieldwork sites be seen as representative of all other similar communities. The strength is the contribution such study makes in augmenting the current scarce ethnographic data at the community or village level in Afghanistan.

As mentioned earlier, it is not possible for a study to be comprehensive and representative. I made an attempt to gather my primary data from a district and a village from two different parts of the country: the eastern province of Nangarhar, and the central province of Bamyan. Geographic and political criteria considered included:

Geographical: what particularities do the district and villages have in terms of geography and its location? Distance and influence from centre: how far (or close) is the village from the district and the provincial capital? For example, one site is very close to the district headquarters and the other much further away.

Political: the influence of the government and other intervening forces in the district and in the villages respectively; is the presence of central government felt at the local level? If yes, then in what forms? The geopolitics of the location was also considered – how important (or marginal) the site is to central government in terms of flow of resources, political elites' relations to the region and what impact security and the political economy of the site(s) might have on central government and vice versa.

At the village level, the existence of Community Development Councils (CDCs) was a key consideration for selection. I also took into account diversity in ethnic, language, sectarian (Sunni or Shiia), political and historical grounds.

At the district level I looked at the presence of the MRRD's District Development Assemblies (DDA) and IDGL run programmes such as the Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) and development assistance provided by the international military.

At the provincial level I considered, how significant the provinces were to the centre in terms of revenues and income, geopolitics, and the presence of international forces (See also broader political criteria above).

In selecting the provinces and districts, I mainly used available secondary data and my existing knowledge of the political relations of the two provinces eventually chosen. After an initial visit to each province, and in consultation with some of the local informants and their views, the villages were selected. In Nangarhar, a university lecturer who was my key point of contact was helpful in introducing me to the villagers. In Bamyan, the regional director of a national NGO was my initial contact. I must point out here that the villages chosen were new places to me; I had no previous knowledge of them prior to this research. Although my previous work experience in Kabul, Nangarhar and Bamyan was an important asset in terms of building trust and connections and meeting informants, I knew no-one in the villages and, more importantly, no-one in the villages was aware of my working background. This enabled me to somewhat reduce the risk of the informants' responses being shaped by my previous roles as a NGO leader or representative in the field.²⁹ However, I assume my general status in the eyes of majority of informants (particularly in the provinces) as an educated woman arriving from Kabul and studying in the UK had an influence in their mostly positive responses about women's role in local governance interventions.

²⁹ Previously, I had visited both provinces for purposes of programme assessments and delivery of services.

Table 1 Breakdown of the field research by groups, locations and affiliations

Groups	Location	Positions	# of Interviews
MRRD	Kabul	Senior officials current & previous	A total of 34 interviews conducted in Kabul
IDLG		Senior officials current & previous	
GIROA	Kabul	Relevant officials from other institutions	
NGOs	Kabul, Nangarhar, Bamyan	Development Practitioners	
Civil-Military Advisors	NATO HQ, Kabul	Advisors on governance work	
PRT	Kabul, Bamyan	Commander in Chief of PRT Bamyan	
International Advisors	Kabul	Experts on governance & development	
			34
Provincial Government	Nangarhar	Relevant officials	14
Provincial Council	Nangarhar	Previous PC candidate	1
District HQ	Behsud (Nangarhar)	District governor & relevant officials	5
Qala-e-Janan Khan	Behsud (Nangarhar)	Men & women of different age groups & governance positions	33
			53
Provincial Government	Bamyan	Provincial governor and other relevant officials	16
Provincial Council	Bamyan	Members	2
District HQ	Yakawlang (Bamyan)	District govern and relevant officials	14
Katakhana & Akhundun	Yakawlang (Bamyan)	Men & women of different age groups & governance positions	22
			54
Total number of persons interviewed:			141

3.6. Ethical and security aspects of the research

In conducting field research in war zones or conflict-affected settings, there are two different dilemmas related to ethics and security; one is the protection and safety measures that the researcher takes for her/himself and the second is the protection and safety of the informants. My previous experience had indicated that in terms of security, especially if for the researcher, the field is her/his home country, there might not be a universally applicable code of conduct. Instead, it is crucial for the researcher to visit the areas with an open mind and well-informed updates on the security situation from a minimum of three sources. Wood also points out the importance of the

researcher's own judgement when it comes to ethical dilemmas on the ground; she argues that "following abstract rules will not be sufficient" when conducting field research (Wood 2006:374), that is the researcher should use her own knowledge of the context and circumstances to take measures regarding her and her informants' safety. For instance, when I visited one of the two rural field sites, I was advised locally not to arrive in the village by private vehicle, but rather to use local public transport. This proved very helpful in reducing my profile; in particular, arriving by public transport, I distanced myself from the typical aid worker who travels in expensive cars and is seen by the local population as a source of funding and resources. I also followed the local dress code for women and shared travel plans only with one or two reliable contacts who needed to be informed in case of emergency.

Following security updates through different sources is also very important and there are often different ways of doing this. I learnt, from this (and other field experiences), not to rely on one or even two sources. I followed the International NGO Safety Organisation's (INSO) Afghanistan updates, local media sources and kept in contact with provincial security officials that I had had contact with. I was fortunate in not experiencing any major setbacks to my planned schedule of research, but it is important to have a 'Plan B' and possibly a 'Plan C', understanding that research sites are prone to unexpected circumstances, and that unforeseen events might make Plan A difficult or even impossible.

Lawson, in her review of Tania Murray Li's book, highlights the importance of the researcher's responsibility towards those who share time, information and insights (Lawson 2010). In a context like Afghanistan, where people have experienced numerous visits by experts and journalists who come, take pictures³⁰ and then leave without any particular 'return' or benefit for the communities, I made sure to explain to my informants the purpose of my research, especially in language they could understand.³¹

Sensitivity to the context of the informants is important in research investigation, but it is even more crucial in the fragile situation of a war zone. For instance, it is important to compose questions carefully and avoid pressing informants to respond if they feel uncomfortable. There were times that informants requested that I not even take notes

³⁰ I avoided as much as possible taking a camera to the field sites and taking pictures for this reason.

³¹ My description was that the study would allow future sociology students to make use of and learn from the ethnographic data. I in no way implied that the study was another prescription for changing their lives.

about stories they shared; in these cases I respected their choice and did not include their material in the thesis.

3.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I outlined the methodological approach adopted for this study. I began by highlighting how my position as an ‘insider/outsider’ affected the process of conducting the study. I discussed different methodological aspects of the study of local governance relations and pointed out that it requires a qualitative and multi-sited ethnographic approach to enable us to follow events that shape and rationalise programme and policy interventions that result in changing local power dynamics and governance relations. I chose the extended case method as a suitable qualitative approach for this study because it allows the researcher to engage with existing processes as they are, rather than how they ‘ought to be’. This approach has the openness required to focus on practices in order to understand power relations following a case that could be a process, an event or a set of processes and events. The chapter elaborated on the different criteria considered in the selection of field sites. Finally, the ethical and security challenges of carrying out research in a difficult environment in terms of security and conflict dynamics were addressed.

Chapter Four

Setting the scene: a historical perspective on Afghanistan's local governance relations

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will mainly follow a historical political economy approach to the study of local governance. It provides some background on how local governance relations in Afghanistan have evolved historically and examines some of the key episodes and features of changing patterns of local governance in the pre- and post-2001 periods, setting the scene for the empirical chapters that follow. In order to understand local governance relations in post-2001 Afghanistan, it is necessary to appreciate their evolution over time; from the imperial interventions in the 19th and 20th centuries to on-going efforts by successive Afghan regimes to reshape power relations at the local level.

As elsewhere, local governance relations are both constitutive of, and constituted by, broader political and social orders. In Afghanistan, the village has been central to efforts aimed at establishing order, authority and legitimacy. In a society where power is segmented and decentralised, central state elites have long grappled with the problem of how to extend their authority and build stable political relations between the centre and the periphery. Local governance, hence, is the product of a process of evolving interactions and contests involving domestic and international actors at multiple levels.

Governance relations in contemporary Afghanistan cannot be understood through studying only the formalized practices and actions of the government and its official institutions. Rather, local governance institutions are frequently the inadvertent result of unplanned and informal processes of bargaining, conflict, contestation and negotiations (not least during extended periods of warfare) as well as the official interventions by the state. Hence, there are four critical components that need to be considered and studied: international actors and their resources, national level political elites, local elites and the local population. It is the recalibration of relations between these different elements that can help us understand the shifts in local governance relations over time.

Therefore, this chapter attempts to explore how the relations and interactions between these different actors and institutions have shaped and been shaped by local governance relations. Section two of this chapter explores the pre-2001 history of local

governance relations and how it has evolved. This is followed by section three, where I introduce the concept of the village and how different scholars understand it. I then elaborate on the patrimonial relations that structure much of Afghanistan's village governance by presenting an overview of village actors, institutions, and everyday practices of local governance. In section four, I cover broader sub-national governance discourses and debates in the post-2001 period to situate the particular programme and policy interventions discussed in the subsequent chapters.

4.2. Pre-2001 history of local governance interventions

Afghanistan has long been located at a crossroads of cultures, empires and people. Its turbulent history is linked to its position on a geo-political fault line – between imperial Russia and Britain in the 19th century and the Soviet Union and the United States in the 20th century. Global powers have sought, with varying degrees of success, to reform its governance institutions, and Afghan elites at the national and local level have sought to exploit its strategic location by extracting resources and support for their own agendas (Rubin 1992; Saikal 2004; Rubin 2006; Barfield 2010). Local governance relations are influenced and shaped by a broad interplay and bargaining between local elites, the global superpowers and national government elites.

Prior to the formation of the modern Afghan state the region was incorporated into successive empires, including the Ghaznavids (10th – 11th century) and the Ghurids (12th century), or was comprised of a system of independent, local principalities known as *Muluk-ul-Tawayefi* (local fiefdoms), where each locality was led by its own ruler (Olesen 1995:21). From the 16th to the 18th century the area lacked a distinct political identity and was a buffer between the Safavid Empire of Persia, and the Mughal Empire of India. Mirwais Khan Hotaki was the leader of an indigenous attempt to gain independence from the Persian Empire in 1709, and won independence in 1713 of what is now southern Afghanistan. Finally in 1747, after the Persian Afsharid Empire disintegrated with Nader Shah's assassination, Afghanistan emerged as an independent country led by Ahmad Shah Abdali. Abdali founded Afghanistan's first empire, the Durrani, and was elected as the *shah* (king) through a *Loya Jirga* (Grand Assembly) (*ibid.*).

The subsequent trajectory of state-formation was heavily shaped by superpower rivalries. In the 19th century, the British and Soviet empires attempted invasions several times³² only to realise that, given the architecture of the country and its society, direct

³² Hammond points out there have been three invasions during the 20th century; in 1925, 1929 and during Nadir Shah's reign in 1930 (Hammond 1984:12-25). And, obviously, the three

rule failed to maintain the loyalty of the people and the state. Instead, indirect rule by sponsoring the government and its institutions, particularly the army, became the dominant form of engagement between Afghanistan and competing international powers.

Afghan rulers depended upon external largess. As a rentier state, the country did not generate or mobilise sufficient resources to fund the state institutions domestically through taxation. Therefore, the Afghan state was unable to institutionalise taxation and create a social contract between the people and the state. For instance, the Afghan army that was sponsored externally was used mostly to prevent internal revolts rather than to defend Afghanistan from external aggressions (Rubin 1992). Often Afghan loyalty to one external sponsor was considered a threat by other world powers which would then sponsor rival groups.

From Afghanistan's perspective, although Afghanistan was not colonised directly, it acted for most of the colonial era as a buffer space between superpowers (Rubin 1992; Olesen 1995:20; Rubin and Armstrong 2002; Cramer and Goodhand 2002; Saikal 2004; Barfield 2010; Monsutti 2012; Shahrani 2013). That often meant one or both superpowers had an interest in sponsoring the Afghan state and its strongmen. Whenever this balance was upset by one superpower exerting a stronger influence/sending more funds, its rival would support revolts, uprisings and insurgency.³³ Hence, foreign subsidies and assistance historically allowed the Afghan rulers to maintain and consolidate their internal control and governance relations; however, the longevity of their rule was seldom assured (Cramer and Goodhand 2002:893).

Afghanistan's borders were defined as a result of negotiations (and contestations) that mainly happened between two empires: the British and the Russian (Olesen 1995:28; Dorronsoro 2005:24). For the British, Afghanistan's stability was a priority as they did not want disorder and chaos on their Indian frontiers. They sponsored an annual subsidy that was financed by taxing the people of India; between 1883 and 1901 Afghanistan received a total of 28.5 million rupees from the British (Kakar 1979:90).

Afghan-Anglo (19th and early 20th century) wars are both examples of these attempts at direct invasion.

³³ In Afghan history, all these terms have been continuously politicised and instrumentalised. It is not fair to assume that there were no genuine or bottom-up revolts and uprisings, but as soon as signs of dissatisfaction were sensed by competing empires, they were hijacked and turned into a sponsored rebellion and hence, a more intense form of war broke out. This is indeed what the recent and contemporary history of Afghanistan tells us.

Additionally, Britain pledged to support the Afghan government during revolts and uprisings (Dorransoro 2005:25).

The alliances between the Afghan government and imperial powers followed a complicated trajectory. For example, in the final overthrow of Amanullah's reign in 1929, the Soviets and Germans supported the government, while the British supported Nadir Shah, Amanullah's key opponent (Hammond 1984). By supporting Nadir Shah with funds and military support the British pursued their twin objectives of securing the frontier areas and limiting Russian influence. British support to the Afghan government continued throughout the rule of Nadir Khan and his son Zahir Shah during 1930s to 1950s (Olesen 1995). Although, given national sensitivities, this support through Indian government or direct British government was not admitted openly (ibid.:174).³⁴ Superpower jostling for influence in Afghanistan continued after World War II through Soviet and American support to the Afghan military and economy (Dupree 1973:507-530).

Although the major external players in Afghanistan have been imperial powers, neighbouring countries such as Pakistan and Iran have also been important.³⁵ During the anti-Soviet war of 1979-1989 and onwards, Pakistan and Iran were considered key players in sponsoring different anti-Soviet factions on the basis of religious and ethnic relations. For instance, the Peshawar-based *tanzims*³⁶ were sponsored by Pakistan and in **chapter seven** I focus in greater detail on the Shi'a anti-Soviet factions that were sponsored directly by the Iranian government and religious networks.

As Kandiyoti points out, Afghan rulers often exploited superpower rivalries to mobilise 'locational rents' in order to finance the state expansion (Kandiyoti 2007a). External efforts to influence events in Afghanistan have also had mixed results. At different times externally supported efforts by the central government to impose authority at the local level have enabled brutal policies of state expansion and consolidation which, in turn, encountered significant resistance sometimes resulting in the collapse of the regime (Gregorian 1969).³⁷ For instance, Amir Abdur Rahman's (1880-1901) British-

³⁴ Olesen provides an example of how Nadir Shah in his 1931 speech said that he did not have support from a 'foreign power' yet after he gained power the British rendered support to him. He justified this by stating that 'even King Amanullah received assistance from the British.'

³⁵ See Giustozzi (2000:114) and Ibrahimi (2009a) on the Iranian regime's role in supporting Hazara groups.

³⁶ The term '*tanzim*' in the Afghan context, refers to the anti-Soviet Mujahiddin parties that were formed in Pakistan.

³⁷ It has to be noted that the encounters have not been entirely locally driven and motivated, but the broader superpower or empire competitions have always played an important role in pitting

sponsored state-building efforts in which he enlisted Pasthun groups in the subjugation of Hazarajat areas (Emadi 2007), although entirely enforced for the purpose of state centralisation, left a lasting imprint on the country's politics in the years to come. Later, King Amanullah's 1919 declaration of Afghanistan's independence from the British lost the subsidies that had supported his government. As a result he had to rely on local taxation and, in the absence of systematic and institutionalised mechanisms, the larger burden of taxation fell on local elites and their clients. These attempts to increase taxation, combined with rapid social and political reforms, led to revolts against his reign. Once the revolts emerged, they were financed by the British, resulting in his overthrow.

After a period of chaos in 1929, once Nadir Khan gained power he set up a system of rule that was conservative and status quo oriented. Barfield and Nojumi (2010) have pointed out that the 'do-little' policy of the Musahiban dynasty (1929-1973) of Nadir Khan and his descendants is an example of a minimalist approach to the expansion of state influence (Barfield and Nojumi 2010:42). The Musahiban rule was formed on the basis of a political settlement agreed upon by the state or the royal regime, the land-owning elites and the clergy. In other words, state interests were mediated through local notables. The policy resulted in half a century of peace, the longest period Afghanistan has ever experienced (Barfield and Nojumi 2010:42). However, one has to bear in mind that while minimalism may have provided stability in that particular period, its long-term consequences were more problematic. Due to the lack of development in the countryside, a tremendous divide between the rural majority of poor and destitute and the small urban elite minority contributed to the emergence of major conflicts in Afghan society. These found expression in the political mobilisation of Islamists and communists, leading to the post-1973 bloody coups of the Soviet era and, more particularly, the post-1979 Soviet invasion.

Finally, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan's (PDPA) attempts at land reform, education and women's emancipation represent another example of the central government's attempts to impose a system of governance at village level through heavy-handed and coercive means. Not only did it result in the collapse of the government, it also opened the door to the chaos and gradual collapse of formal state institutions throughout the 1990s. The Taliban rule in the mid-1990s was another form of autocratic centralised system of rule that could not reach beyond the district level in terms of expanding its authority. Nevertheless, these interventions were externally

rival factions against each other; this has been the case since at least the 19th century and perhaps before.

funded attempts by central governments, and local elites often succeeded in maintaining a strong form of patrimonial system in place that continued to rule villages and local settings. Rather than transforming this system, the wars since 1978 multiplied patronage networks and made them more competitive. In the next section I will explore the emergence of a new class of local elites as a result of war. As Rubin (1992) has pointed out, foreign aid not only produced a 'rentier state' but also 'rentier revolutionaries' (Rubin 1992:81; Cramer and Goodhand 2002:894). In other words, the aid dependency of Afghanistan was not only about the state being dependent on foreign subsidies – parts of society and its elites who challenged the state as anti-government forces during the years of war (regardless of their ideological positions) have also been 'rentier' in the sense that they have depended on external support financially and politically.

In the pre-1978 context, the rural elites were mostly influential *khans* or *mirs* (depending on context) who exercised public authority on the basis of land ownership and their relations with the state. During the years of war the monetisation of the rural economy through humanitarian assistance by NGOs and financial and military support to different commanders by the Western countries as well as religious networks in Pakistan and Iran, resulted in the weakening of the position of traditional leaders. In the following section, I will provide more details about how the emergence of this new class of war commanders has changed local power dynamics.

In this section, I have discussed how historically, local governance relations are the product of complex interactions between international actors, domestic elites at the national and local level, and local relations more generally. As different periods of the pre-2001 context demonstrated, changes in the international political environment and its interest in Afghanistan led to alterations over time in the balance between local elites and the Afghan state

This history of the region now known as Afghanistan informs us that neither intervention nor rule by outsiders are new phenomena. Historically, local groups have responded to interventions in different ways, including resistance, negotiations and entering into relations of mutual benefit (Ann Long 1992). Against this historical backdrop, I now turn from a national level analysis to a focused examination of the local by interrogating the definition and structures of an Afghan village.

4.3. Defining ‘the village’ and village governance

In this section, for the purpose of clarity, I first elaborate on the literature about defining the village and what I mean by ‘the village’ in order to clarify the concept which is still widely contested among scholars and government actors. I then define ‘local governance’ the way it is understood in the Afghan context, followed by introducing village governance and examining the interactions between different actors and institutions.

4.3.1. Local setting or village

The term ‘village’ has been part of rural development discourse since the 1950s (Roussel and Caley 1994; Ellis and Biggs 2001, cited in Mielke and Schetter 2007). In Afghanistan, a village – also known as *qarya*, *karia*, *deh*, *qalah* (in Dari) or *kelay* (in Pashto) or *qishlaq* (in Uzbek and Hazaragi) – is understood as the smallest geographical unit with a physical space and its own social norms and socio-political order that continuously negotiates its relations with power structures in its immediate surroundings and broader formal and informal institutions.³⁸ Similar to Ibn Khaldun’s analysis of medieval Arab society, in Afghanistan too, historically, a major part of the population was nomadic, later settling to form sedentary communities or what he called ‘sedentary civilisations’ (Barfield 2010:56). These sedentary civilisations consisted of communities based on surplus agricultural production that enabled rulers to sustain the community and create a complex economy (*ibid.*) as well as a form of socio-political order to lead their everyday practices of governance. Villages often formed in response to needs for water and thus came to define a group of people who lived in it and shared resources such as water (Dupree 1973:132). Dupree identifies two types of sedentary village settlements: linear and nuclear. The linear type of villages, which are also common in Southeast Asia, are often located close to (and along) rivers or other water sources (Ahmad 1956 cited in Dupree 1973:132). The nuclear type are clusters of villages surrounding a city and, according to Dupree, this is more common in Afghanistan (*ibid.*). As Dupree explains “[in the Afghan village] a man a is farmer first and foremost”; although agricultural activities and animal husbandry are the most common professions, each village also has its specialists such as carpenters, masons, bricklayers, butchers, shoemakers and a *mullah* (religious leader) (*ibid.*).

³⁸ Dupree (1973) mentions *qarya*, *deh*, *qishlaq*, *manteqa* and *kelay* as different ways people in different parts of Afghanistan refer to the village. However, there are differences between *manteqa* and the other terms as a *manteqa* may include more than one village. See also, Mielke and Schetter 2007.

In literature discussing state and society relations, centre and periphery relations and sub-national governance, the term '**local**' has been used for any locality (including provinces, districts and villages) outside 'the centre' or, more precisely, Kabul.³⁹ In this thesis, I have used 'local settings' to refer to villages where elites are continuously engaged in negotiating their mutual interests with formal state institutions and other external intervening forces. Schetter argues that defining the 'local' in Afghanistan is difficult (Schetter 2013:272) and there is little consensus on what a village consists of or how it is defined constitutionally or politically by the state.⁴⁰

However, Ghani does provide a three-fold categorisation of villages in the form of *kariajat* (suburbs), *karezat* (villages dependent on underground irrigation channels) and *mahalajat* (quarters of the city) that were the main organisational pattern of settlements from 1747-1901. He also refers to a document from the 1880s that indicates that '*kariajat*' was defined by a political officer of the British forces as "(all) villages within a radius of about 20 miles round the city with a few isolated spots of cultivation to the northwest" (India Army, General Staff Branch, Gazetteer of Afghanistan, Kandahar 1914/1980:228 cited in Ghani 1982:10).

In Dari, *qaryajat* or *kariajat* is the plural form of *qarya/karia* or village. Thus this indicates that since the 1880s there has been recognition of villages, mainly for the purpose of tax collection, conscription and provision of services, linked to the state-building and state expansion policies of the central government. However, there is no definition or taxonomy of Afghan villages linked to their territorial, demographic or ecological characteristics in official state documentation (Mielke and Schetter 2007; Pain and Kantor 2010; Schetter 2013).

In some cases, the term **community** is used in the same way as village. Smith (2009) introduces 'community' as a term that, like village, is not clearly defined. She draws on Agarwal's (1994) definition of community with a residency focus (e.g., the village community), or social grouping such as religious community, tribal community, etc. and notes that a person can simultaneously be a member of different communities (Smith 2009:1). In Hazarajat, Monsutti notes the term *mantega* is used for a collectivity of

³⁹ I note that here Kabul means the capital city where most of the central government's institutions and offices are located (rather than the province).

⁴⁰ For instance, The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) define village in terms of number of population for their programme implementation: a Community Development Council was to be established for every 200 families. That meant that if a village had fewer inhabitants then they had to merge with other villages to meet the 200 family standard of the NSP.

villages in the same area.⁴¹ And, according to Roussel and Caley (1994), *manteqa* is understood as “a geographical area grouping together a number of villages and identified by its own inhabitants, as well as the inhabitants of the surrounding areas, by a single regional name” (Roussel and Caley 1994:5 cited in Monsutti 2005:84).

Often villages are assumed to comprise a single tribe or family, however, depending on the context, location and considering the very long history of mobility of people in Afghanistan, not all villages are homogenous residences for a single tribe, ethnicity or religious sect. While the majority tribe or ‘descent group’ (*qawm* or *kheyli* in Pashtun populated areas, *tayfa* or *gala* in Hazara populated areas) often monopolises the leadership of the villages, there can be diverse groups of people from different kinships and ethnicities living in the same community; this is particularly the case in modern times due to the movement induced by protracted conflict and the refugee experience (Monsutti 2005).

Afghan villages contain “a multitude of institutions that govern behaviour of the people inside it” (Harriss-White 2003, cited in Pain and Kantor 2010:15). Pain and Kantor (2010) use the ‘village republic’ concept to highlight the autonomy of villages. Although this may be valid in terms of internal governance relations, it is also important to note that Afghan villages and their leaderships have continuously been interacting and negotiating with formal and informal power structures beyond their boundaries. Schetter introduces the term ‘social order’ to avoid a state-centric perspective on local politics in order to provide an ‘unbiased’ analytical ground. He defines ‘social order’ as “all processes and actions in which humans organise themselves in any circumstances” (Schetter 2013:13), adding that, depending on context, the state may or may not be part of a social order.

As Leftwich points out, institutions or orders are involved in producing or receiving and distributing or redistributing resources, and the way such practices are carried out is ineluctably political (Leftwich 1983:82). Schetter goes on to describe local politics as “social interactions in which social actors and agencies are deciding about the constitution of their lives on a daily basis” (Schetter 2013:273). Arguably this definition misses the intensely political nature of local governance in Afghanistan – as explored in the following empirical chapters, ‘the local’ has become a highly politicized domain,

⁴¹ *Manteqa* is also used in some other parts of the country. Administratively in the past, it was considered as a ‘sub-district’ or *alaqadari*. However, the difference with *manteqa* is that the latter perhaps is not as formalised as *alaqadari* used to be in areas with a government presence.

particularly following the war years in which decisions about resources, authority and leadership have frequently been matters of life and death.

For the purpose of this thesis I have used 'local setting', 'village' and 'locality' interchangeably to mean the smallest units of population gathered in commonly defined territory that constitute a recognized socio-political order and which negotiates its interest continuously with formal and informal actors and institutions beyond its boundaries. The social aspect of the order refers to the underlying norms, rules and beliefs that shape communities' everyday interactions and arrangements while the political part is to do with the way they agree on who represents them, how they should be represented within and particularly outside their locality and how resources are accumulated and distributed.⁴²

4.3.2. Local governance

In post-2001 Afghanistan, sub-national governance affairs are organised at four levels: provincial, district, municipality and village. Four sub-national governance institutions are formally recognised: the provincial governor's office, district governor's office, municipalities (provincial and district level) and provincial council. All these institutions are administratively connected to the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) (Nijat 2014:22). Although the constitution requires elections for district and village councils, these have not been held and neither have been formally established. As a substitute, there has been a programme of semi-formal councils in district and village levels as elaborated upon later.

The *woleswali* (district) is where formal governance institutions' official presence ends. The state's influence reaches further in an informal way through the *khan* or *arbab* or his representative known as the *malik* or *qaryadar* (village representative) who are often selected by village elites to represent their community in matters related to government.⁴³ These matters historically included taxation, revenue collection, legal and judiciary related issues and security arrangements. The relations between the *woleswal* (district governor) and *qaryadar* are formal and bureaucratic, wherein the district court and security services have their own approaches to maintaining security in

⁴² Here, by adding political I would like to draw on (Leftwich's 2007:13) elaborations on politics as a process: "Politics as process – a necessary and pervasive feature of human society". In his view politics consists of different activities from co-operation and resolution of conflicts to production and distribution of resources. Leftwich adds that these activities can be formal or informal, public or private, or a combination.

⁴³ It should be pointed out that even district borders are under constant debate, and changes are being re-negotiated continuously based on local interests and preferences in terms of religious, ethnic tribal representation, etc. (Mielke & Schetter 2007:74).

their territory and the social services such as health, education, agricultural and other economic amenities all have their own methods for interacting with actors and councils in the villages.⁴⁴

Wilde and Mielke theorise local governance⁴⁵ in the Afghan context as:

[t]he mundane exercise of power which involves decision-making and implementation processes within communities and concerning inter-community affairs, with the aim to realize peaceful coexistence and the provision of other collective goods in the local environment. This refers for example to the joint usage of everyday resources (i.e. their allocation, distribution, and accessibility), dispute resolution, and the provision of security. (Wilde and Mielke 2013:355)

Saltmarshe and Medhi further point out that in Afghanistan's post-2001 context, governance⁴⁶ is seen as a web of interacting relations that includes formal and informal elements. They define 'local governance' as:

The values, norms and conventions that different social, political and administrative groupings apply to meet their organisational goals, along with the interaction between them. Governance takes place in the form of action or influence that maintains or modifies these forms of behaviour and occurs at all levels of human organisation. (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011:12)

Although Afghanistan's constitution is highly centralised, de facto power structures are extremely decentralised with local power holders managing local fiscal and political affairs with limited or uneven involvement from the capital/centre (Nixon 2008; Barfield 1984; Cronin 2002). Nevertheless, customary or local institutions and state structures have not evolved in isolation from each other (Noelle-Karimi 2006; Schetter 2013; Cramer and Goodhand 2002). Rather, the way in which central power imposed rules of taxation, conscription and devised political representation in effect linked or co-opted 'traditional' or local structures to the central government. For example, the concept of the *Loya Jirga* (Grand Assembly) was institutionalised by the early Afghan state-builders and set a precedent for co-opting traditional modes of organisation and

⁴⁴ Miakhel (2012), for instance, discusses how such divisions happen with regard to security arrangements in Pashtun dominated areas.

⁴⁵ It is important to note that some have also used the term 'local governance' for provincial and district governance relations, but in this study, it mainly refers to village or community level socio-political relations.

⁴⁶ For these authors local governance includes governance relations in provincial, district and village levels in both formal and informal terms.

legitimacy, thus shaping the trajectory of both state and traditional leadership (Hanifi 2004).

Historically, local or village *khans* have variously had reciprocal or conflictual relations with the central government and with their client groups. Although they may not have a direct relation with central state elites, other mediating actors and institutions such as warlords, governors, district governors, NGOs and religious bodies have played a role in brokering between *khans*, populations and external structures. Hence, the *khans'* interactions and negotiating positions allowed them to have a degree of autonomy from state structures and authority over people. Maintaining an independent capacity to mobilise means of coercion and generate resources locally enabled them to sustain their bargaining power vis-à-vis the state. In return for their autonomy they, to varying degrees, were subject to state provisions with regard to tax collection, conscription and liaising between the state and local population (Kakar 1979). Such traditional actors maintained their position, not as rivals to the state, but as actors who contributed to state-formation and state legitimacy at the local and national level.

To some extent these hybrid governance structures persist in Afghanistan today. As Goodhand and Sedra note, the Afghan state constitutes “an amorphous ensemble” of forces or actors, institutions, and their interrelations and practices, where the boundaries between public and private, formal and informal, state and non-state, legal and illegal are continuously contested and blurred (Goodhand and Sedra 2013:242). It is from the interrelations between these different actors (and the institutions they represent) and their practices that our understanding of the state and its operationalisation in Afghanistan’s contemporary context is shaped.

4.3.3. *Patrimonialism and village governance*

Following the above discussions on the nature of local governance and the patterns of interaction between national and local level elites, here, I further develop how patronage-based forms of authority shape everyday practices of local governance in Afghanistan more broadly. First, though, it is necessary to further ‘unpack’ the Afghan village in terms of its internal institutions and actors and how they inter-relate. I then present an overview of how these actors, structures and relations have been influenced by different periods of the political turbulence that the Afghan state and its formal institutions have experienced over the past three decades.

Village actors, institutions and characteristics

Unlike the state, Afghan villages⁴⁷ are an enduring part of Afghanistan's institutional landscape, operating similarly to what (Wade 1988) would call 'village republics' that are capable of providing public goods, security, dispute resolution and other basic services to the population.⁴⁸ However, this capability of villages can best be understood when villages are studied through their relations with the state or other formal and informal institutions that interact with them. Relations between Afghan villages and the state have evolved and changed over the past decades. Dupree argued that Afghan villages had historically erected a metaphorical 'mud-curtain' that protected the village from the outside world (Dupree 1973:249) and Barfield (2010) suggests "village affairs [are] concealed from outside observation" (Barfield 2010:223). As will be explored further below, in many ways the years of war have opened up the villages to the external world and new actors, and have torn down the 'mud curtain'. This does not mean that village elites have completely opened up to all forms of interventions. While village leaderships maintain their gatekeeping role, with the emergence of new actors and changes in the political and economic relations as a result of war and various forms of interventions, power dynamics have changed and are no longer keeping the village isolated from outside world. This is due to a range of factors that include the experience of conflict, war and migration, as well as changed expectations of the state as a result of warlord and then Taliban rule. And the return of generous international subsidies and development assistance to the Afghan state over the past decade has changed the state's role from extractor of resources from the locals as was common in the past to one of provider of services through donor-funded state interventions. Hence, local populations do not solely relate to government through the courts in cases of criminal charges, or through taxation and conscription, but in fact, expect to receive goods and services from the government.⁴⁹ Hence, while patron-client relations still lead local politics, the relations between village patrons and the state have evolved over recent years.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Given that each government institution follows their own definition of the village, there is no agreed number for all villages in Afghanistan by the central government. It ranges from 28,500 (MRRD) to 35,500 according to the Afghan Geodesy and Cartography Office.

⁴⁸ Pain & Kantor (2010:14) explain the differences in understanding 'village republics' in the Indian model where the state has penetrated to the village level institutions and in Afghanistan where most villages operate on their own and have only a limited relation with the central state on a number of matters.

⁴⁹ Hakimi, for instance, elaborates in this regard from the local security point of view with examples of how local militias have been operating as part of the state projects rather than as an alternative to it (Hakimi 2013).

⁵⁰ The degree of this change depends on each context and it certainly varies from one region to another, but given the wide range of state interventions through provision of services such as

However, because of the extreme variability of the Afghan socio-political context, generalisations should be treated with caution. This variability means that every context has its own idiosyncrasies in terms of its leadership and governance structures. As Dorronsoro notes, villages in Afghanistan are not homogeneous entities with shared unified identity, class status and political affiliations (Dorronsoro 2005:11). Since the reign of Abdul Rahman Khan (1880-1901) communities in the south and centre of Afghanistan have lost such homogeneity (if it ever existed) as a result of his state centralisation policies.⁵¹ Although there surely are exceptions, in general, histories of migration, war and conflict and/or geographical and climate changes resulting in people's movement have changed villages and the people living in them (Pain and Kantor 2010:8-9; Giustozzi and Ibrahimi 2012). Although people living in a given village share a space in the territorial sense, they can have different kinship, tribal, ethnic and religious affiliations and economic statuses.

External interventions with the same components or packages, therefore, can lead to very different processes of bargaining, negotiations, interactions or contestation between the local elites and intervening actors and institutions in different locales. However, broadly a village is comprised of actors such as a *khan* or *mir* (depending on locality) who has a higher economic status mainly through owning land and property or other businesses; a *malik* or *qaryadar* or *arbab* who is appointed by the *khan* and local population to represent the village to outsiders;⁵² *dehqans* (peasants) who work on the land (for the *khan* mostly or other landowners); a *mullah* or *imam* who leads religious affairs and the mosque; a *mirab*, who distributes water; and *kasabakaran* or people with different technical skills such as barbers, carpenters, tailors, blacksmiths, etc.⁵³ Additionally, post-1979, there is the *qomandan* (commander) or *sargroup* (sub-commander), and school principals, doctors, nurses, teachers, and NGO workers, etc. are also considered as actors residing in a given locality.

health, education and development assistance, I believe there are changes that need to be noted.

⁵¹ According to (Olesen 1995:62) these policies included breaking of the traditional power structures that were acting independently in society, royal lineage, tribal and religious establishment and his goal was to merge their political and economic interests with those of the state (Dorronsoro 2005:11).

⁵² According to Monsutti (2005:91) in the Hazarajat region, *qaryadar* referred to the person who, before the 1964 constitution, was known as *mehtar* and whose role was to represent a cluster of villages or a *manteqa*. The *qaryadar* was proposed by the heads of families and appointed by the government representative. This is very similar to what has been recently revived by the IDLG (Independent Directorate of Local Governance), but this time for each village rather than for a *manteqa*. See **chapters six** and **seven** for further elaboration on Qaryadar in modern days.

⁵³ *Kasabakaran* or professionals could be farmers as well as carrying out their profession. But in some cases, they remain engaged with their profession and are paid by the farmers in exchange for their services.

The role of rural women in everyday economic and political activities, particularly their role in local governance relations is somewhat less covered in research on Afghanistan. Tapper (1991) for instance, views women more as objects than players in the domestic politics of the household, although she acknowledges the indirect ways in which women can undermine men's prestige or honour.⁵⁴ I believe these can have an important impact on the male family member's position and status in the society. Daulatzai, for instance, argues that rural women are not seen solely as objects, and do influence social processes (Daulatzai 2013:193-208) and Mielke points out the persisting importance of seniority in women's role in local politics (Mielke 2013:245-264).⁵⁵ Rural women are indeed active economically and have positions as 'the wife of', 'the mother of' or 'the daughter of' the village actors listed above. Because of the patriarchal system, women are not recognised in their own right politically, but rather as an attachment to the professions of their male relatives (Barakat and Wardell 2002:920; Ahmed-Ghosh 2003; Kandiyoti 2007a; Kabeer, Khan and Adlparvar 2011:19). Pain and Kantor study village level livelihood trajectories in four provinces, unpacking local institutions and governance practices (Pain and Kantor 2010:4). For instance, NGO workers as intervening actors perceive villages in the same area as 'progressive', 'conservative' or 'traditional', based on responses from village elites to programme and policy interventions' conditionality such as women's inclusion or being 'NGO friendly' (*ibid.*:14). This also demonstrates the collective ways of expressing a position in the village that characterises a given local setting.

There is a distinction between institutions and actors.⁵⁶ In Afghan villages, the *shura* (or local council) of 'elders' mostly comprises village actors with the highest economic and social status,⁵⁷ and operates as an institution controlling the distribution of roles, positions of power, resources and overall norms and behaviours that characterise the system of governance in a given village (Barfield 2010:222). The village elite's authority

⁵⁴ According to Tapper who studied women among the Durrani tribe, men have complete control over women, particularly in terms of maintenance and protection. Men's honour is therefore linked to the sexual behaviour of women and any sexual misconduct will result in dishonouring the men. Hence, there is an important power factor on women's part in this matter (Tapper 1991:221, 223).

⁵⁵ For further elaboration and examples of this, see the two empirical chapters in this thesis, particularly the sections discussing NSP conditionality and how villagers respond to it.

⁵⁶ Turner (1997:6) defines an institution as "a complex of positions, roles, norms and values lodged in particular types of social structures and organising relatively stable patterns of human activity with respect to fundamental problems in producing life-sustaining resources, in reproducing individuals, and in sustaining viable societal structures within a given environment."

⁵⁷ This includes the actor's affiliations with the powerful actors within the immediate region (*manteqa*), district, provincial and or central government authorities; political or military groups (*tanzims*), NGOs (particularly ones who provide services in the area), private sector and so forth.

is mainly based on a combination of wealth, social rank and political networks outside the village (*ibid.*). Village *shuras* are where power lies, where the decisions on appointing powerful actors such as the *malik*, *mullah*, *mirab*, etc, occur. *Shuras* also act to resolve internal disputes and conflicts and determine village responses to external interventions. As the two empirical **chapters (six and seven)** detail, decision-making by the village elites is not transparent, while donor procedures require elections for Community Development Council membership and leadership. Some studies note that while there might be multiple *shuras* such as the *Etehadya Dehqanan* (Farmers' Union), the village school committee, Afghan Local Police and other security-based committees, *ulema* (council comprised of religious scholars and clerics), and other donor funded committees, the elite *shura* often has the strongest authority. It is usually the elites who approve or select the members of each of these councils. In some cases where village elites act in competition with each other, they may push for their choice of members to each of these councils. Subsequent multiplicity of *shuras* can be confusing especially for those who are not familiar with local politics.

Afghan politics and religion are intertwined, so the *mullah* as an actor and the mosque as an institution are important in villages. There is often one grand mosque and many small mosques in each village depending on the size.⁵⁸ Roy (1986) elaborates on the importance of the mosque in the village, its authority and its socio-political position. The mosque is often located at the centre of the village, a place for communal gathering of men, although there are other places such as the tea-house or *hujra* that is (usually) owned by the *khan(s)*, but the mosque, as a place to perform religious rituals and collective prayers is considered more neutral than a *hujra* (Roy 1986). It is not common for women to go to mosques. However, among the Shi'a population, there are *hossainias* where men and women congregate for prayers and, more often, for religious ceremonies. The *mullah*, who leads prayers, particularly the Friday mass prayers, takes care of ceremonial events (such as birth rites, weddings, funerals, etc.) and is selected by village elites. Roy points out that the *mullah* is not part of an institutionalised body and his selection is grounded in his "piety and for his wisdom and one who, frequently, comes from a family which traditionally provides the mullah..."(Roy 1986:31-32). The *mullah's* role is ideological, and while contexts vary as to the degree to which the elites attend to the *mullah's* edicts, his interpretation of daily events and preaching on politics, society and customary practices influence villagers' understandings and the village's reputation regionally and beyond. Only *mullahs* of

⁵⁸ A grand mosque or *Masjid-e-Jameh* is where Friday prayers and other large ceremonies such as Eid prayers are conducted.

government registered mosques receive a salary; others hold other jobs to earn a living.⁵⁹

There is a strong element of collective performance in village decision-making. Village decisions are not taken by an individual, but a collective. Pain and Kantor argue that, in general, collective actions are motivated by risks of resource (such as pasture and water) scarcity, while other social factors like social structure and demographic composition may also play an important role (Pain and Kantor 2010:17). They note that pre-1978, the distance between the state and rural villages and post-1978, the risks of war and conflict in Afghanistan factored in enforcing collective actions towards provision of services (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, village governance as a form of collective action does not necessarily mean goods and services or power and resources were accessed equally by all villagers. Rather, village patrons (meaning the elites, predominantly the *khan* and, later, strongmen) maintain their gatekeeping role to control access to resources, power and various aspects of village governance through a patron-client or patronage based system of governance. As discussed in the earlier theoretical chapter, patronage based governance indicates that patrons as individuals with high status maintain control over resources and the physical protection of lower-status clients (Scott 1972a; Lemarchand and Legg 1972:151 cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012:6). In Afghan villages, clients could be the village population who were dependant on patrons to ensure their access to resources and privileges in their locality and sometimes beyond their locality.⁶⁰ It is also crucial to keep in mind that patronage forms of governance relations in Afghanistan, and indeed elsewhere, are inherited historically from indirect imperial rule or later the colonies, where mediators were required for tax and revenue collection and ruling populations outside the centre (IDS 2010:50).⁶¹

4.3.4. Village actors and institutions during war (1979-2001)

Despite the many different forms of intervention into villages during the war, none of the central government interventions managed to dismantle the on-going form of village leadership as a whole.

⁵⁹ “The mullah is often poor and his ‘job’ is a way of supplementing what he earns growing crops - an activity which continues to take up part of his time” (Roy 1986:31-32).

⁶⁰ Sharan (2011:1115) also explains broader national level political relations as being strongly based on the patronage based system of governance where the president uses state resources and positions to consolidate his power and strengthen patronage networks.

⁶¹ See also **chapter two**, section 2.4 for further elaboration on this point.

As previously discussed, the Soviet invasion and its sponsored government took a rather radical approach in expanding their reform agenda based on what they claimed was their Marxist-Leninist ideology, by using the state apparatus to transform relations in the countryside and to maintain control over political order (Rubin 1992; Saikal 2004). The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) deployed a combination of 'repression' and 'reform' (Rubin 1992). They mainly implemented their reform policies through the existing traditional power structure of *khans* and *maliks* (Barfield 2010:231). At the village level, they created 'revolutionary committees', whose members were teachers or security officers sent from the centre with no linkages or prior understanding of village dynamics (*ibid.*). This was perhaps the first direct form of intervention in villages by the central government, and was only carried out in a limited number of villages where the government had control.

During the Mujahiddin time, with no central direct governance over sub-national matters, traditional village leadership remained in place, and although new powerful actors gained more power and influence relative to the *khans* and *maliks*, they did not displace them or the role they played in the village executive. Cramer and Goodhand (2002) see this period as one of gradual collapse of the central government's control over provinces and districts, wherein ethno-regional coalitions, sustained by external support and internally generated resources from expansion of the war economy, emerged (Cramer and Goodhand 2002:896).

Successive wars empowered different military leaders and conflict entrepreneurs who rose to prominence at the expense of traditional power holders (Rubin 2002; Cramer and Goodhand 2002; Giustozzi 2003; Lister 2007). New factional and religious networks also strengthened their roles independently of the state with the help of different regional and international actors, and gradually captured the state, culminating in the Taliban regime. Although there is limited literature on the impact of the Taliban period (1996-2001) on local governance – and there were wide geographical variations – the authority or power of the *mullahs* as heads of the local mosques generally increased at the local level during Taliban rule (Nojumi 2004). According to some sources, the Taliban also continued to deal with *khans* and *maliks* regarding village governance,⁶² although Giustozzi argues their main counterpart in many parts of the country became the local *mullahs* or clergy (Giustozzi 2013:81).

⁶² Interviews with village malik and mullah in Behsud #41 #42 dated 27.11.2011.

During the war period, one of the new class of actors that emerged were military commanders who became *the* key actors in provinces and districts, subjugating village populations through their sub-commanders and, in some cases, through the existing power structures of *khans* and *maliks*. In other words, growing decentralisation of the means of violence and the breakdown of customary conflict management systems undermined the gatekeeping role of local elites. Consequently, local settings were no longer in the hands of the 'traditional' *shura* of village elites alone, but depending on time and place, during the years of war other actors, particularly commanders under Mujahiddin rule (1992-1996) and the *mullahs* (1996-2001), gained more authority and control over village affairs (Nojumi 2004; Giustozzi 2009; Giustozzi 2013).

4.4. International interventions in the area of governance post-2001

The post-2001 context of Afghanistan's governance and state-building represents a case of complex governance relations as a result of too many different international interventions trying to support the state-building processes in the country. Monsutti (2013) notes that today's Afghanistan cannot be comprehended only through the prism of a geopolitical struggle (Monsutti 2013:270). One of the key differences in comparison to the past is the multiplicity of intervening actors and institutions involved in the overall state-building processes. These actors include not only governments, but also transnational institutions such as the World Bank, the UN, the IMF, private companies, foundations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) funded through faith or political channels (Monsutti 2012:566). Such diverse actors, interests, and agendas have often targeted people in the same locality. Over three decades of war, these intervening actors as sponsors of the anti-Soviet war, charity work, religious institutions such as *madrasas* (religious schools) and mosques, development assistance (by NGOs) and so on have cumulatively played a significant role in reconfiguring local governance relations. Afghan communities have learned to extract and channel external resources whilst simultaneously resisting interventions that endanger their interests (Long 2001; Arce and Long 1992). As previously mentioned, the cliché of the 'inward-looking' village is no longer a helpful way of understanding the power dynamics and bargaining positions of actors in all these layers of the country's formal and informal structures.

Post-2001 Afghanistan can only be understood if one holds two parallel processes in mind: one is the formal state-building process that presents "the theatrics of state-building"(Mukhopadhyay 2014:22) with its own discourses, Weberian notions of state-

building, and bureaucratic institutions establishing a form of liberal democracy.⁶³ The roadmap for this, agreed at Bonn, Germany in 2001, outlines this track of state-building for Afghanistan where an interim government was established through a national consensus (or emergency *Loya Jirga*); a constitution was written; presidential and parliamentary elections were held and the state obtained its legitimacy through following these steps; and henceforth, the government was to operate as the machinery for enduring liberal democracy.

The second parallel process is what Migdal considers “the real politics of many Third World societies” (Migdal 1988:32 cited in Mukhopadhyay 2014:22), where outcomes were not as intended or planned by intervening forces sponsoring state-building. In Afghanistan ‘real politics’ refers to a strong patrimonial system of rule where political groups and military factions (or politico-military groups) maintained their positions in order to gain their share of power throughout the state-building process. Although on the surface, Afghanistan appears to have completed all the Bonn Agreement’s phases, the existing regime is far removed from a Weberian model of democracy. It is important to look at both these parallel concurrent processes, as ignoring either would only offer an incomplete picture.

During the Bonn Agreement the two processes were integrated from the beginning as Mujahiddin groups (war-time actors) and networks were incorporated into formal state structures. This system of rule is extensively studied by Sharan (2011; 2013) as a form of ‘elite network’ dominance who maintain their influence over governance relations through their patronage networks. Positions and authority are maintained by a combination of generating revenues and rents from local clients, and through participation in the ‘theatrical’ processes of state-building (Giustozzi 2007; Coburn 2011; Sharan 2013), generously strengthened as well as politically recognised by international interventions at the Bonn Conference and onwards (Rubin 2006; Giustozzi 2007; Sharan 2011).

The presidential system allowed the president to have a full monopoly over the selection of governmental posts across provinces and districts, while his appointees for the ministerial cabinet required parliamentary approval. However, given that the foundations of the post-2001 government was based on the division of power among the elites, similar to his cabinet ministries, the president divided the key provincial post

⁶³ Also see, for example, Ottaway & Lieven 2002; Ghani et al. 2005; Rubin 2006; Ghani 2009.

choices among his close allies who belonged to different factions and parties.⁶⁴ Key positions such as provincial and district governors, chiefs of police and mayors were appointed by the president, despite the fact that the mayoral positions were supposed to be electoral according to law (Nijat 2014:22).

Both parliament houses, the *Meshrano Jirga* and *Wolesi Jirga* (upper and lower houses), were also filled by elected members who represent people by division of provinces and only a third of upper house members were selected by the president. A quota system was in place to ensure women's participation in the parliament (25%) and half of the presidential appointees to the upper house were required to be women, too. Parliament's main job as a legislative branch of the state was to pass or approve laws and bills and to also endorse the president's appointed or introduced ministers. These tasks, particularly the latter, gave the parliament a strong hand in the bargaining of patronage based interests with the executive part of state in exchange for approving cabinet ministers (Humayoon 2010; Sharan 2011, 2013). The way parliament operated in the post-2001 political context, was mainly to act as a platform for negotiating factional and personal interests based on patrimonial forms of relations in their interactions within the parliament (passing laws) as well as in relations with the government (Sharan 2013). Women's representation in the parliament remained symbolic in terms of addressing gender related matters and they have been widely co-opted by the main parliamentary factions for their own purposes and interests (Coburn and Larson 2014; Roehrs and Kouvo 2013).

The international footprint in Afghanistan's post-2001 context is characterised by its generous political, economic and military support of the government. Given the broad and vague definition of governance by different intervening institutions, it is difficult to clearly define international support in terms of it (Goodhand 2014). However, it can be argued that the overall governance support included institution-building (both in terms of infrastructure and administration), public financing, public sector reform, rule of law, security sector reform, etc. The US government provided nearly \$24.7 billion to support 'governance and economic development' in Afghanistan between 2002 and 2013 (*ibid.*). Based on a US Department of Defence report to Congress, 'governance' included reconciliation and reintegration, national and sub-national governance, judicial reform and rule of law, anti-corruption and human rights. Rubin et al. (2005:60) pointed out how particular interests, for instance, of the US government on security matters, resulted in more resource allocation and attention to the security sector than to the

⁶⁴ See, for example, the Killid Group's Special report by Sadiqzad (2010).

civilian parts that were mainly supported through the World Bank. The international interventions also did not continue at the same pace. Throughout the years after 2001, there have been continuous shifts and changes in different countries' (especially the US) policies towards Afghanistan that directly affected broader and local governance relations. For instance, during the earlier years, most US military engagements were counter-terrorism oriented, while by late 2009, the Obama administration announced its COIN strategy which emphasised much stronger linkages between the political, developmental and security aspects of the intervention.⁶⁵ The increasing funding flow through military channels during the military surge (2009-2012) resulted on the one hand, in the creation of parallel structures and disruption of institution-building processes that were sponsored through non-military institutions and on the other, it also opened up opportunities for parts of the central government elites to use large sums of short-term oriented funding for the purpose of strengthening their own patronage networks. The following chapter (**chapter five**) will provide more evidence on the ground on how the broader shift in international policies added to the complexity of the governance interventions.

State institutions and their international counterparts were not the sole intervening forces in Afghanistan's sub-national politics. The international military, through its Commander's Emergency Response Programme (CERP), developed Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) with the military commander in the province managing its budget.⁶⁶ The military COIN approach blurred the line between military and civilian (NGO, development) actors. In some instances, as Monsutti (2012) stated, the bilateral development agencies of donor countries competed with the PRTs, while civilian NGOs became targeted by the Taliban or other factions on charges of being perceived as 'agents' of the military (Jackson and Giustozzi 2012:15). COIN doctrine assumes that investing in development will result in more security, but Dorronsoro (2011) finds that there is no correlation between development aid and security, providing examples where the effect of aid on security was marginal as it did not result in strengthened state structures at the local level (Dorronsoro 2011:11). Massive intervention in local

⁶⁵ Scholars looking at political and, especially, military affairs emphasise the difference between Counter Terrorism (CT) and Counter Insurgency (COIN), for example, Hughes, citing Boyle: "[a counterterrorist] mission would focus exclusively on Al-Qaeda, while offering little or no support to the [Afghan government]; a COIN mission envisages a comprehensive commitment to defeating the Taliban and rebuilding the Afghan state while destroying Al-Qaeda operatives there." (Boyle 2010:335 cited in Hughes 2011:126).

⁶⁶ Monsutti points out that the budget for CERP has increased from US \$40 million in 2004 to US \$1 billion in 2010. More importantly 60% of the USA's reconstruction funds were also channelled through the Department of Defence (Johnson, Ramachandran & Walz 2011: 7, 9, cited in Monsutti 2012:564).

governance through the military has created yet more conflicts between different elites or patrons as they compete to gain more benefits from these resources.⁶⁷

The overall bureaucratic system of the state (including national, provincial, and district administrations) is defined in the Constitution (articles 71-80) (Nijat 2014:21). The Constitution calls for decentralised sub-national governance by delegating provision of services to local administrations.⁶⁸ Nijat (2014) elaborates on four different levels of sub-national governance: provinces, districts, municipalities and villages. According to the Constitution, there should be elected councils for all different levels of governance including the provincial, district and village councils and mayoral positions, but as of 2014 only provincial council elections have been held. However national and sub-national bureaucratic posts were not allocated based on merit, but rather through patronage linkages with warlords or other political elites (*ibid.*:48). At the district level, there is an amalgam of structures and multiple donor-funded 'councils' in place. The MRRD has established District Development Assemblies (DDA) whose members were elected from the district's village CDC (Community Development Council). But like CDCs in villages, DDAs are not constitutionally legitimate.⁶⁹ As another example, recent additions are District Coordination Councils (DCCs) that, according to Nijat (2014), are 'jointly owned' by MRRD and IDLG.⁷⁰ These examples suggest that creating more structures to 'solve' problems of instability and insecurity have created more chaos than order in practice.

The key point that state institutions and actors are missing is that state-building cannot be limited to solely technical interventions, providing funding or setting up 'councils' to solve entrenched problems, and indeed the failure of these attempts to attain 'good governance' should be evident in the outcome of these on-going practices (Chandler 2010; Suhrke 2007). These national governance dynamics show how myriad interventions by diverse actors, including transnational institutions such as the World

⁶⁷ Dorronsoro (2011:9,11) sees the international military's involvement in local power struggles by taking sides through providing contracts or resources to one of the rivals as hugely problematic and a mistake.

⁶⁸ See Article 137 of the Afghan Constitution (2004).

⁶⁹ By law, the elections for both district and village councils should be organised by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) but this has not happened for either simply because they are donor-driven, programme funded institutions that are now being negotiated and competed upon as governing bodies.

⁷⁰ **Chapters six and seven** in this thesis will use the examples from selected districts to elaborate further on the complexity and conflict that initially existed between the two institutions (MRRD and IDLG) and this act of 'joint' ownership is perhaps an attempt to address the prior issue of parallel structures and chaos. However, it has to be noted that while the MRRD-sponsored District Development Assemblies may not be constitutionally recognised, they have been sustained because of funding availability, whereas IDLG sponsored councils have already been dismantled.

Bank and the military's efforts through COIN have, through their uneven resource distribution, contributed to further confusion and chaos at the sub-national level (Nijat 2014:22).

Finally, within the context of local governance and how actors and institutions are engaged, one cannot ignore the role of religious institutions and their competing sources of investment and support. Although updated research and studies are limited in this regard, an extensive level of support from Pakistan and some of the Arab countries, as well as Iran, continues to flow across the country supporting Sunni and Shi'a Afghan elites and communities respectively.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the broader local governance relations historically and in the contemporary context, where international, national and local actors continue to bargain, negotiate and, sometimes, contest their interests in changing local governance relations.

The chapter noted that villages have been central to creating order, authority and legitimacy. I argued that local governance relations cannot be studied solely or in isolation from their relations with the state and the way these are organised. I defined 'local governance' as an ongoing process of interactions and negotiations between village or local settings' elites and the formal or government institutions and actors as well as informal actors involved in the political and economic activities that these villages benefit from.

I also argued that Afghan villages cannot be seen as homogeneous entities, neither can they be considered as areas with a complete absence of organisation or order. For the purpose of analysis, it is important to keep the particular context, history of events and different characteristics of each local setting (or village) in mind, and avoid drawing generalising conclusions.

Further to this, I elaborated on how patron-client based local governance relations in Afghan villages changed from the pre-war period where the local elites were mostly exercising public authority on the basis of land ownership and their relations to the central state, to war-time political economy where monetisation of rural economy through political, financial and military support of external interventions resulted in the emergence of a new class of politico-military elites, one which continues to play an important role in the context of post-2001 political settlement.

I highlighted the evolution of the pre-war, war-time and post-2001 characteristics of the local governance. And how policy changes by international sponsors of the central government influenced the changes in the post-2001 governance relations.

Looking at the role of women in different historical phases in local governance relations, the chapter demonstrated that radical approaches to change women's status through political means were faced with resistance. The chapter demonstrated that women's public role in village governance has not been recognised historically, although, in the context of post-2001 political context, quotas and conditionalities on women's inclusion have, to some extent, contributed to formalising women's public role in village governance; it was noted that this happened within the patriarchal system and not outside it.

The chapter concluded that patronage based governance in Afghanistan is not solely dependent on the rent-seeking efforts of the patrons through local extractions, but also on incentives and support and recognition via international interventions through different intervening actors and institutions, including governments, NGOs and other transnational institutions and networks.

Chapter Five

The view from Kabul: Negotiating local governance interventions at the national level

5.1. Introduction

This chapter examines how two local governance programmes were negotiated, formulated, designed and operationalised at the national level. It specifically looks at the National Solidarity Program (NSP) of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), and the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG). Both institutions focused on institution-building and governance at the village and district level, but in other respects were quite different. The chapter highlights how competing agendas, logics and rationalities at the national level led to very different approaches to local governance. The chapter further reflects upon the ongoing conflict between the two institutions over the 'ownership' of local governance authority and the reasons for this conflict.

The chapter critically examines the ostensible and actual goals of the programmes, the process by which they were formulated and designed by national and international actors, and how they were negotiated in practice. The chapter demonstrates the agency exercised by domestic actors in this process and questions the notion that governance programmes typically are designed by external 'experts' and consultants. In this case, this chapter highlights how programmes were negotiated and translated through interactions and negotiations between international and national actors and shaped by national politics. Analysing the process of negotiating programme design and formulation, the chapter shows the influence of a range of seemingly extraneous interests and concerns such as changes in international donor policy, national elections and their impact on local elections, and local resource distribution.

The chapter has five sections, including an introduction. In section two, I introduce the MRRD's district and village governance-focused programmes, and discuss how they were designed, funded and operated. The focus then shifts to the design process of the NSP as one of the largest MRRD programmes for village governance and service delivery. I further examine the declared and hidden goals of this programme. Another programme, the National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP), will be examined, but more briefly. NABDP is a large programme and I will only address its role in establishing the District Development Assemblies. In section three, I explore the reasons behind the establishment of the IDLG and how the programme became a point

of convergence for the Afghan central government and international military institutions (particularly the US), which had a common interest in strengthening local patronage-based networks. In this section, I highlight the ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ dimensions of IDLG’s work on matters related to district level governance. I conclude by outlining how the different and sometimes contradictory interests of international actors and various parts of the Afghan government both converged and diverged on specific issues and at particular moments in relation to local governance.

5.2. MRRD’s national level engagements on local governance

The MRRD was officially founded in 1988, but was to all intents and purposes inactive prior to 2002.⁷¹ However, after the Bonn Agreement, by revisiting its mandate with a strong focus on poverty reduction and social protection in rural Afghanistan, the ministry emerged as one of the most significant government agencies with nationwide coverage of development issues. Under the leadership of professional Afghan development experts, the ministry became one of the main recipients of donor funding for institution and capacity building at the district and village level. MRRD’s annual budget in 2013 reached US \$504,722,800. One of its leading programmes, the National Solidarity Programme, alone spent US \$1.8 billion between 2003 and 2014, with an annual budget of \$265 million in 2013.⁷² Mohammad Haneef Atmar⁷³ was chosen as the first minister of the MRRD on the recommendation of Dr Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, then a finance minister in the newly established government of President Karzai.⁷⁴ As a young and energetic member of the then interim administration, Atmar brought in a group of Afghan professional development experts who operated in line with the donors’ standards and expectations (Nixon and Ponzio 2007). Atmar’s exemplary role, which with one exception was followed by his successors,⁷⁵ was instrumental in attracting donor funds to the ministry and it built a strong connection with the donor community by consistently demonstrating its technical expertise in managing

⁷¹ MRRD’s official website <http://mrrd.gov.af/en/page/65> (accessed 04.02.2013).

⁷² Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2013:97-98).

⁷³ Mohammad Haneef Atmar was a member of the Afghan intelligence organisation (Khad) as a young adult. He then moved to the UK to study for an MA degree in public policy and post-war reconstruction. He returned to work in development NGOs in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Post-2001 he served as Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), Minister of Education, and Minister of Interior. In 2011 he founded a new political party, the Rights and Justice Party, and he is involved in the political processes. Sources: http://csis.org/files/attachments/111109_Atmar_bio.pdf (accessed 04.07.2014); (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2005:408).

⁷⁴ Interview with Ashraf Ghani #123 dated 11.06.2012.

⁷⁵ The exception was Minister Jarrullah Mansuri, who got his position through his patronage network’s support. Interview with Minister Barmak, #86 dated 15.04.2012

development programmes.⁷⁶ The senior staff of the ministry were primarily young Afghan professionals who had been educated abroad and had technical skills and experience in managing aid programmes. As a leading official of the ministry pointed out, the ministry is highly technical and no one without prior experience of working on large-scale development programming and public administration would be able to survive there for long.⁷⁷

At the time of my field research (2011-12) the MRRD ran six national programmes. The most high profile programme in terms of national coverage, scale of funding and public visibility was (and still is at the time of writing) the National Solidarity Programme (known as *Hambastagi Mili*). This was followed by the NABDP that focuses on district-level institution-building and service provision, the National Emergency Employment Programme (NEEP); Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Irrigation Programme (Ru-WatSIP); the Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Programme (AREDP); and the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development – Facility (CARDF). On its website, the Ministry also outlines its gender policy of “promoting gender integration into all areas of rural development initiatives undertaken in Afghanistan” (MRRD 2011a:12). This policy mainly focuses on women’s participation in decision-making processes, giving less attention to analysing barriers that limit such possibilities and how they can be reduced.

The MRRD approach is as much about local democracy promotion as about development. In this respect it resembles the Indonesian example of community development, as discussed by Barron (Barron 2010; Barron et al. 2011). The approach is based on the premise that building local level structures is necessary to sustain service delivery. Independent of this, the ministry emphasises promoting ‘democratic governance’ and related institutions as desirable in their own right. Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, recipients of NSP grants examined in this research understood the programme to be more of a service delivery mechanism than an instrument of governance or ‘democratic governance’. Provision of basic services and ‘strengthening local governance’ are both part of the mission statement of the ministry (MRRD 2011b).

For the purpose of this thesis, I have selected two of the MRRD’s national programmes. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and the NABDP. The NSP

⁷⁶ After Minister Atmar, Minister Ihsan Zia, previously his deputy, replaced him. He was followed by Jarrullah Mansuri and from March 2012, Wais Ahmad Barmak. Barmak, like Ihsan Zia has been one of the leading members of MRRD since Atmar’s leadership.

⁷⁷ Conversation with a senior officer who previously served at MRRD as executive director for one of its programmes, December 2013.

was chosen because of its history as one of the first post-2001 programmes on village governance with almost full national coverage, its political and economic importance in terms of the attention it attracted from donors and the wider public, and most of all, its significance in relation to local governance relations. I will then introduce the NABDP which, among its different functions, has established 388 District Development Assemblies (DDA) in 34 provinces of Afghanistan. I have looked at this programme specifically in relation to its work on forming district assemblies or councils.

5.2.1. The National Solidarity Programme: Formulation and design process

The NSP is not a rural development, but a rural upliftment that encompasses all government activities including health, education, agriculture etc. at the village level.

Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai (2012)

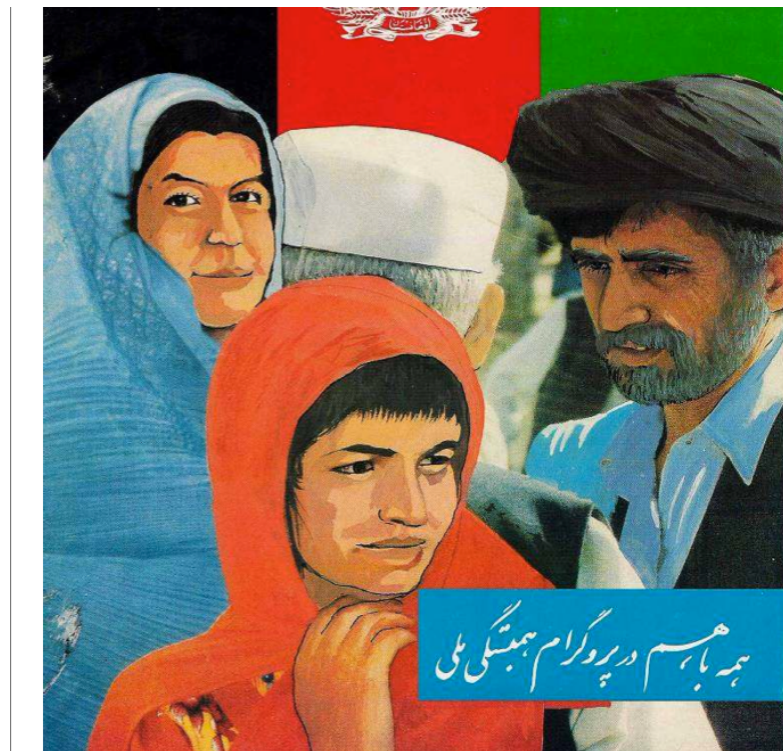


Figure 1: A background page in a national NGO (Sanayee Development Organisation)'s magazine on the NSP. "All together in the National Solidarity Programme"
[Translation by author] ©SDO website.

This section examines the process of NSP formulation and design. The analysis shows that designing a programme intervention is not a linear process where a blue print is simply imposed by donors with no concessions or adaptation for the local context. Rather, this section reveals a complex process of bargaining, negotiations and competing interests involving different actors and institutions which resulted in the birth of a development programme with the largest budget and widest national coverage in Afghanistan's history.

Actors in the process of NSP formulation

Three different categories of actors were involved in the process of formulating the NSP; the first were development practitioners who had worked with communities in Afghanistan for decades, had a comprehensive knowledge of the ground realities and were familiar with donor-funded projects and programmes. The second, Afghan technocrats consisting of professional experts returning from the diaspora, many with extensive pre-war familiarity with the country and very strong relations and familiarity with the foreign donors and international development discourses. In the words of James Scott they were considered 'the knowledge experts' (Scott 1998:286) and included people with expertise on the World Bank's community development models and overall development interventions, and those with familiarity with Afghanistan. Finally, the donors who were interested in funding the programme participated as well. In the following section, I elaborate on the various sets of interests and narratives surrounding the origin of the NSPs. The analysis is based upon field research conducted during 2011-2012.

Origins and inspirations of the NSP

The inspiration for the NSP came from a combination of the community development models of the World Bank, and the Afghan political discourse and power plays within the government at the time. Nixon (2008), for example, sees the origins of the NSP in both the World Bank's global projects and Afghanistan's traditional practices such as *shuras* (councils or collective way of decision making) and *ashar* (voluntary community labour) (Nixon 2008:17-18). Yet it is important to deconstruct the actual process of the NSP formulation to understand how national and international actors and institutions and their interests, world views and approaches resulted in the programme design (*ibid.*).

Looking at the chronology of the World Bank's engagements in Afghanistan after 2001 (World Bank 2014a:295, 297-8, 319), it becomes evident that the Bank's leadership was ready to invest in large scale programme interventions for several reasons: Western countries and their allies supported the signing of a new political settlement in Bonn. The military presence of the US and its allies in the country was accompanied by a broader vision of state-building and peace-building, providing the context for an ambitious reconstruction and development agenda. The major international financial institutions (IFIs) and a large number of donors were prepared to support the Bonn settlement and the broader development agenda through the provision of resources. In short, the political will of the international sponsors, combined with their financial

commitment, provided both the preconditions and the motivation for launching the NSP. In its initial stages, the process appeared to be a top-down initiative. One of the key actors at this early stage was Dr Ashraf Ghani.⁷⁸ According to him, the NSP should be seen in the context of Karzai's speech at the first Tokyo conference where the national development framework was outlined.⁷⁹

As chief advisor to then Chairman Karzai, my task was to take stock of what was there and of what was needed. I travelled to ten different regions of Afghanistan, my aim was to hear and see what was there. I was also preparing Chairman Karzai's speech for the Tokyo conference which was due on January 1st 2002 (...) It is not like today when you give speeches and nothing happens, that speech was outlining the interim-administration's plans for what came afterwards in all different fields, including security, economic growth, development etc. The initial idea of NSP was born as a result of this process, where I visited different parts of country and saw what potential was there that could be utilised.⁸⁰

One of the areas that Ghani travelled to was Panjshir, where the UN Habitat had its community forums. The programme was designed "to establish sustainable, multi-functional neighbourhood centres that provide economic, educational and social benefits to men, boys, women and girls in the various communities." (UN Habitat 2002: para 3) The UN-Habitat members provided an account of Ghani's travel, which informs us on how two very different agendas and interests met:

We were in search of potential donors and funding for our programmes. One of our leading colleagues was well-connected with the donor community and high profile people. She discovered that Ashraf Ghani is looking for a successful programme and is on a mission to visit provinces. Then we all [the Habitat team]

⁷⁸ Dr Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai is an anthropologist by training. During the 1990s he worked for the World Bank, before joining the UN in 2001 as chief advisor on Security and Economic Development for the Afghan Interim-Administration. He was Minister of Finance from June 2002 to December 2004 and Chancellor of Kabul University, 2004-08. He ran unsuccessfully for office in the 2008 elections. In 2011 he joined the Karzai administration as the head of Transition Administration. As of August, 2014 he was one of the two key front-runners in the presidential elections, leading his campaign with the slogan 'Transformation and Continuity'. Source: <http://en.ashrafghani.com/biography/> (accessed on 04.07.2014).

⁷⁹ President Karzai's Tokyo speech points out: "[...] we intend to implement a local empowerment programme that would allow communities to manage their own resources. Such a programme would allow legitimate leaders to emerge and deal with issues facing their communities with forming a basis for consultative democracy in the future. Block-grants would be distributed to villages and districts, and allocated to projects through inclusive and participatory processes and on the basis of simple criteria." Source: http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/afghanistan/min0201/karzai0121.html (accessed on 08.01.2013)

⁸⁰ Interview with Ashraf Ghani #123 dated 11.06.2012.

worked to seek ways to get in touch with him. We said to his staff: 'We just need ten minutes of his time to explain our programme.' Finally, with our networking contacts, we managed to get him for ten minutes. He got very interested in the programme and promised to go with us and visit our programme on the site. We told him in any of these provinces he can easily go and visit the programme: Bamyan, Kabul, Panjshir, Balkh. Then he visited Panjshir and we heard from our colleague [who used to lead the Panjshir and Parwan programmes] that they stayed up until 3am discussing the programme and all its aspects. Ghani got really interested in this programme and wanted to test if what we were explaining was real. In Panjshir, we also had a women's *shura* besides the men's *shura*, that was even an additional point. After this visit, Ghani returned to Panjshir with a delegation from the World Bank and we arranged their visit with around 150 members of our different community forums who explained to them in detail about the work and how they are organised. The delegation spent three days and picked up on every single detail of the programme.⁸¹

These two narratives demonstrate how the different interests and agendas converged: one seeking a successful model, the other in search of a long-term donor for their programme. Ghani, who for several years prior to 2001 had been a World Bank employee, was familiar with the community development programmes established by the Bank in Indonesia and also in East Timor after independence in 1999. The Bank views the NSP as based on its Community Driven Development (CDD) model similar to that in Indonesia and East Timor, but Ashraf Ghani maintains that it was not a 'copy-paste' version of this model. He preferred to connect the programme's roots with the existing forms of social mobilisations through the Sufi networks that have been dominant in Afghanistan historically (Haroon 2007:38; Edwards 1996):

The inspiration for NSP comes from several sources. The first source is the Sufi networks. I studied this [the Sufi networks] from 1500-1900 onwards in Afghanistan. Its communities are organised around spatial units. Their ties are very strong locally, and weak externally. The mechanism that bound the country culturally most together [in Afghanistan] was the Sufi networks.⁸²

Ashraf Ghani's emphasis of the NSP as a nationally-inspired model rather than a World Bank's CDD inspiration is perhaps linked to where he stood in 2012 when these interviews took place, as a nationalist leader planning to run for president of the

⁸¹ Interview with Development Practitioners #87 dated 18.04.2012

⁸² Interview with Ashraf Ghani #123 dated 11.06.2012.

country. He spent less time discussing how the programme was a nationally modified version of the World Bank's Community Driven Development (CDD) model, but rather linked the NSP with his own historical and anthropological understanding of Afghanistan. He did this in order to justify the legitimacy of the programme (of which he wishes to be known as the founder) to a national audience.

Another important actor involved in the initial designing and implementation of the NSP was Minister Atmar. His background of working with NGOs, familiarity with development practices and his networks in the aid sector enabled him to create a technically professional working team to implement the NSP. With the benefit of hindsight it is clear that the NSP helped facilitate Atmar's subsequent political career. It created a strong support base and platform that he was to draw upon when minister of education, then minister of the interior and thereafter as the leader of a political party that supported Ashraf Ghani's candidacy in the 2014 presidential elections. Atmar was very conscious of the political role of the NSP from the beginning:

NSP came into existence as result of a search for a legitimately and administratively competent local governance structure. Its aim was 1) empowering population through a decentralised means of governance; 2) providing socio-economic support across villages encouraging different communities, tribes and ethnics to work together, and (3) empowering women and enabling them to participate. In terms of service delivery, we were looking for an institution to cover the whole spectrum of law and order, service provision such as health, education etc. And the people's support was key to this.⁸³

The NSP was linked to other sets of interests as well. The UN Habitat staff were interested in marketing 'their' programme in order to attract more and longer-term funding. Ghani, at the time on leave from the World Bank and acting as a UN advisor for the government, saw the model programme as a mechanism to help build a strong centralised state with outreach to the entire population. His response to a UN Habitat official who sought funding of around US \$60,000 was:

I cannot promise I can get you this amount, but I can promise you that I will work hard to convince everyone in government to make this a model for a national programme with nationwide coverage.⁸⁴

⁸³ Interview with Minister Haneef Atmar #134 dated 05.11.2012

⁸⁴ Interview with development practitioners from UN-H in Kabul #87 dated 18.04.2012

It was decided by key actors involved in the process (such as Ghani and Minister Atmar) at an early stage to keep the programme entirely under leadership of the MRRD. This was a fairly easy decision given how the MRRD had positioned itself as a technically competent agency in relation to the donors and that no other ministries were likely candidates. All actors involved in the process agreed that due to government capacity constraints, NGOs would have a role as facilitators for the programme implementation (Ghani and Lockhart 2008). However, both Atmar and Ghani in their discussions pointed out that NGOs should be phased out once the local councils were established.⁸⁵

These general rules and agreements then, moved to the next stage where the actual programme design took place. The World Bank hired consultants who developed an operational manual which provided a set of goals to be achieved through following step-by-step phases of programme implementation. As such, it took the form of a prescriptive guideline to build institutions and change socio-political relations through introducing new sets of rules such as elections, participation of women and so forth.

In this process, there were also key challenges and debates, given the diversity of the team and their competing interests. For instance, according to one informant, some of the NGO actors⁸⁶ [national and international] argued against elections for the Community Development Councils (CDC), because of fears that they would be hijacked by local power holders. Another disagreement was over the conditionality for women's participation. Opponents' arguments were around the danger of strengthening the position of warlords and cultural sensitivity on women's inclusion. Ghani recalled that he was able to convince the other national and international actors to accept both these on the basis of his own experiences and understanding of Afghanistan.⁸⁷

It is also interesting to see how a programme like the NSP was seen through the eyes of the broader government actors, in particular the president. Ehsan Zia, another technocrat who served as minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development after Minister Atmar, and was one of the core team members during NSP formulation, stated:

⁸⁵ Interview with Ashraf Ghani #123 dated 11.06.2012; Interview with Haneef Atmar #134 dated 05.11.2012.

⁸⁶ In terms of earlier categorisation, this was a mix of national and international actors who argued that the rural areas were not 'ready' for such dramatic changes and it would be insensitive to go around and push for women's participation or for elections. Interview with development practitioners #87, #124 and #128.

⁸⁷ Interview with Ashraf Ghani #123 dated 11.06.2012

President Karzai was not highly in favour of a programme like this. He is more interested in the traditional and tribal forms of governance. Yet, he agreed that the aid and assistance must reach the rural areas and villages. Because he trusted Ghani well, he agreed easily on the programme. But the Mujahiddin leaders, people like the vice presidents at that time had no idea about what NSP was aiming for, they also were not interested about it [in the initial days] as they already had more than what they could digest on their plates.⁸⁸

President Karzai's inclination towards traditional orders or customary structures and supporting them was reflected in his 1988 journal article and reiterated in his recent interview in *The Atlantic* (Karzai 1988; Mashal 2014). Although, according to Ghani, the president only gave his support and did not interfere in the NSP, the following section demonstrates how his bias towards customary structures was reflected in the emergence of the IDLG.

For the World Bank, the NSP was inspired by its Community Driven Development (CDD) strategy.⁸⁹ In the case of post-2001 Afghanistan, the Bank's main interest was to follow a model that could strengthen the centralised role of the state. The choice of CDD model for this purpose was interesting as the same model was used in Indonesia for circumventing the state's role or, as Barron et al. (2011) pointed out, the KDP (equivalent of NSP in Afghanistan) was a decentralisation project for strengthening the post-Suharto regime in the transition phase (Barron et al. 2011:x-xi).⁹⁰ The most important difference between the Indonesian and Afghani contexts is that in Indonesian villages and sub-districts, prior to this intervention, the central regime had a strong presence unlike Afghanistan where the formal state presence has often been negotiated by mediators and did not go beyond the district headquarters, as noted in the previous chapter. The Bank liaised with different actors within Afghanistan and internationally, especially Indonesia, where the programme became very popular, for exchange programmes which brought relevant experts together in order to provide a learning space for making the programme more effective. The Bank's interest was based on its political commitment to support state-building and institution-building in Afghanistan, promoting inclusiveness and women's rights as its key interests.

The NSP goals could be understood in two ways. The formal goal is outlined in the NSP documents: "to build, strengthen and maintain Community Development Councils

⁸⁸ Interview with Mohammad Ehsan Zia #94 Dated 19.05.2012

⁸⁹ Refer to **chapter two** Section 2.3.3 for further elaboration of the CDD model and its usage in different contexts.

⁹⁰ See also the extensive work of Tania Murray Li (2005, 2007) on the Indonesian case.

(CDCs) as effective institutions for local governance and social-economic development.”⁹¹ Its declared purpose was to build governance institutions, provide social services and ensure women’s inclusion.⁹² However, since its inception, the NSP has also been associated with broader objectives that are not officially articulated. These included introducing a liberal democracy model on the local level by familiarising Afghans in rural areas with elections,⁹³ voting and overall democratic processes. Breaking the existing influence and dominance of the warlord or strongmen’s control over the local population,⁹⁴ and providing a mediating structure to build direct local (village level) relations between the central government and its sub-national institutions were other objectives. While in line with official objectives, these goals were both broader (e.g. democracy promotion) and more specific (e.g. breaking the power of local strongmen). In order to understand the dynamics of the design and implementation of the programme, it is important to keep in mind these other purposes of building institutions and changing socio-political relations.

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP)

The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) or *Hambastagi Mili/Mili Paiwastoon* (Dari/Pashtu) is one of the largest programmes led by MRRD and has been operating since September 2003. Although the programme is framed as being based on the Afghan traditions of *ashar* (community voluntary work) and *jirga* (council of respected members) and Islamic values of justice, unity and equity (MRRD 2014), as noted earlier it also draws inspiration from the World Bank’s Community Driven Development (CDD) modality (Nixon 2008). As Mulder pointed out, these programmes often have to be localised in order to be accepted by local people and the foreign elements need to connect to local roots and native stems so that they can be grafted (Mulder 1992:217, cited in Hasselskog 2009).

The programme design in 2003 had five phases; (1) social mobilisation and Community Development Council (CDC) elections; (2) Community Development Plan preparation; (3) sub-project proposal preparations for block-grant;⁹⁵ (4) implementation of projects;

⁹¹ The Programme’s official website: <http://www.nspafghanistan.org/index.aspx> (accessed on 11.01.2013)

⁹² Interview with CEO of NSP #2 dated 09.08.2011

⁹³ Conversation with Afghan aid worker in Kabul #91 dated 13.05.2012

⁹⁴ Interview with Dr. Ashraf Ghani #123 dated 11.06.2012

⁹⁵ A block-grant is a specific amount of funding allocated for each CDC to spend on publicly beneficial projects that are identified by the members of the CDC.

and (5) closure of project, reporting and handover.⁹⁶ Around 31 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were contracted as facilitating partners (FPs), responsible for facilitating the whole process until the handover phase.⁹⁷ The FPs were also responsible for helping elected CDC members go through a series of training for ‘capacity building’.⁹⁸

Nixon (2008), in his study of the NSP, provides extensive details on the Programme’s different procedures, varying standards of elections, different types of CDCs in terms of its gender aggregation and other aspects of the programme implementation. (Nixon 2008:20-35)

Since 2003 the programme has covered over 70% of rural communities and mobilised more than 34,383 communities who have elected their local CDCs⁹⁹ (see Table 2).

Table 2 NSP coverage in terms of communities, the block-grant funding they receive and demographic number of male and female members (NSP 2014)

Key Indicators	#
# of communities with CDCs elected	34,383
# of communities financed (at least partially)	31,430
# of communities with full 1 st block-grant utilization	25,572
# of sub-project proposals financed (at least partially)	80,335
# of sub-projects completed	57,728
BG Committed (US\$) Million	1,496
BG Disbursed (US\$) Million	1,411
# of male CDC members	280,832
# of female CDC members	150,561

The block-grant is calculated at Afs10,000 (US \$200) per household with an average of US \$33,500 and maximum of US \$60,000 per community (NSP 2014). It is disbursed directly to CDC accounts and communities are required to contribute 10 per cent of the total project costs in either labour, funds, or material. As of February 2014 the programme has covered 352 out of 364 provincial districts and is planned to expand to

⁹⁶ This means the FPs will hand over the CDC to the provincial MRRD office for NSP (NSP Operational Manual Version V 2009:11-14); Interview with NSP provincial managers in Bamyan and Nangarhar #6 dated 17.08.2011 and #70 dated 14.03.2012.

⁹⁷ The FPs include 1 UN Agency (UN-Habitat), 11 national NGOs, 19 international NGOs, 1 national firm and 1 international firm (MRRD 2014).

⁹⁸ The training includes project management, accounting, procurement and monitoring skills and familiarity with the CDC bylaws and overall NSP processes (NSP Operational Manual 2009:17).

⁹⁹ See NSP webpage <http://www.nspafghanistan.org/> (accessed on 04.02.2013).

a full coverage of 40,900 rural communities by September 2015 (MRRD 2014). Sub-projects funded through block-grants include education, irrigation, livelihoods, power, transport, water supply and sanitation and others (see Table 3).

Table 3 Projects funded by the NSP block-grants since its establishment (NSP 2014)

Sector	Completed	Financed				
	# of sub-projects	Disbursements US\$	Beneficiaries	# of sub-projects	Budget US\$	Beneficiaries
Education	5,836	37,934,851.14	1,914,656	6,538	61,225,599	2,104,582
Irrigation	10,377	162,241,037.61	3,950,507	15,870	293,477,711	6,178,291
Livelihood	2,481	8,964,619.61	599,404	2,549	9,599,744	613,338
Power	6,838	153,402,919.23	3,188,839	7,866	183,882,628	3,589,281
Transport	15,280	275,345,700.99	6,332,090	20,689	420,698,368	8,439,656
Water Supply & Sanitation	13,164	188,752,163.93	5,130,090	18,584	291,909,993	7,110,006
Miscellaneous	2,491	45,504,364.50	992,325	5,000	111,582,209	1,765,259
Grand Total	56,467	872,145,657.00		77,096	1,372,376,253	

The NSP's total budget from May 2003 to September 2015 (excluding community contribution) was set at US \$2.7 billion and total expenditure as of April 2014 was US \$1.865 billion (NSP 2003). NSP funding is entirely dependent on donors (NSP 2013).¹⁰⁰ While most donors channel funding through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF);¹⁰¹ a few also have bilateral agreements. The ARTF is the main machinery for operationalisation of the NSP based on the CDD modality, which is managed by the World Bank.

NGOs were the primary service providers in most Afghan rural communities during the decades of war (Goodhand 2013:290). This gave them the potential to be important actors in the NSP implementation process that was led by a newly established government that had very low human as well as institutional capacity. However, this strength of NGOs as facilitating partners (FPs), including their familiarity and access to

¹⁰⁰ The key NSP donors are the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA) at US \$437 million (19.95%), The ARTF at US \$1.569.48 billion (71.50%) and the Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) at US \$41.81 million (1.90%). Bilateral donors mostly contribute through ARTF at US \$145.31 million (6.65%) (NSP 2013).

¹⁰¹ The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) was set up by the World Bank following other 'post-conflict' situations. The ARTF is a multilateral arrangement operated by the World Bank with a management committee including the Asian Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank, UNDP and the Afghan Ministry of Finance.

communities, also had a downside in the way the MRRD desired the NSP's goal to be explained to people in the villages: NGOs often worked under strict rules of declaring themselves as 'non-political' and 'non-governmental' and as such they avoided explaining the political aspects of the programme to communities – the governance aspects of the programme were barely mentioned by FPs to local villagers.¹⁰² Instead the provision of services through block-grants was highlighted by the FPs' Social Mobilisers when they introduced the NSP to villagers.¹⁰³

The purpose of the programme was defined as "to build, strengthen and maintain Community Development Councils as effective institutions for local governance and socio-economic development" (NSP 2014). Members of the CDC were elected through secret ballots and women's inclusion was a non-negotiable condition. The programme's focus on rural communities that had historically remained beyond the reach of national government marked a significant turning point. For the first time for some rural areas of the country, the government reached out to communities, not to extract resources, but to provide services and to facilitate participation in a supposedly democratic process. And, on paper at least, the programme dealt directly with 'elected' actors rather than selected intermediaries. Although historically, there had been attempts to reform the mediated nature of state-society relations, as the analysis of this programme will unpack, this could be seen as a systematic attempt to reconfigure local power structures and governance institutions.

The programme very quickly utilised the human capacities of Afghan returnees and recruited hundreds of staff who had skills and experience with NGOs working on community development (PRDU 2012). These groups of Afghans became partners to the international actors in Afghanistan, particularly in the fields of economic development as the other allies of the Western countries, the warlords and militia leaders,¹⁰⁴ lacked the necessary language skills and familiarity with programme management.¹⁰⁵ For warlords (at the national level) the concepts of development and economic growth were quite unfamiliar and thus there was a greater opportunity for technocrats and western-educated Afghans to influence this part of the newly

¹⁰² Interview with FPs and development practitioners #87 dated 18.06.2012 & #5 dated 14.08.2011 & #94 19.05.2012

¹⁰³ The following empirical chapters have detailed elaborations on how SMs introduced the NSP to villagers. See section 4.2 in **chapters six** and **seven**.

¹⁰⁴ In the Afghan context, warlord mainly refers to leaders of Mujahiddin factions who were involved in the anti-Soviet war and later in the civil wars of early 1990s.

¹⁰⁵ The funding flow to Mujahiddin leaders in the form of 'blank cheques' is commonly discussed among Afghans referring to the 1980s. The lack of accountability on how this was spent encouraged NGOs to make a distinction between this and their work. NGOs began to work under a level of accountability which only later became more standard.

established government.¹⁰⁶ The technocrats, therefore, had an important role in framing the direction of the country's major development and economic programmes from early 2002.

This whole notion of development programming was associated with a particular set of technical concepts and language widely used by the MRRD staff and donors, but obscure to the uninitiated (Cowen and Shenton 1995; Ferguson 1994; Ludden 1992; Scott 1998; Skaria 1999 – all cited in Long 2001; Mosse 2005:4). For instance, the hierarchy of planning is explained as follows: the Community Development Council once formed, will produce a Village Development Plan (VDP), then these plans should be incorporated via the District Development Assembly (DDA) into the District Development Plan (DDP). The district plans are meant to provide the basic material for Provincial Development Plans (PDPs) authored by the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) that consists of various line ministries and provincial level executive authorities and is chaired by the provincial governor (TAF 2007:32). In theory, the village plans were incorporated into the district plans and the district plans into the provincial plans; thus a bottom-up planning was supposed to be responsive to the local population's needs. However, in reality many different sets of (top-down) interests permeated into the process, as explored in the following chapters, which affected key decisions about what was selected, what to fund, how long for, and on what scale, etc.

5.2.2. MRRD's district assemblies

According to Article 33 of the Afghan constitution that regulates electoral matters, district councils were supposed to be established through free, secret and directly balloted elections (Nijat 2014:19). Legitimate elections, according to the law, are only conducted under the Independent Election Commission's direct supervision: at the time of writing (2014), there were no district councils that could be formally recognised. This 'gap', according to the MRRD, was 'filled' through the ministry's programmes to create District Development Assemblies (DDAs) through the MRRD's National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP). According to the MRRD, this programme has two main purposes: building and strengthening district level institutions to 'independently address priority local needs' and provision of social services. Multiple donors funded a total budget of over US \$351,675,696 between 2004 and 2012.¹⁰⁷ The programme's

¹⁰⁶ According to one of the ex-MRRD ministers, the two vice presidents, both of whom represent Mujahiddin warlords, had no interest in the MRRD and its work; they were more engaged with MoD and Mol affairs and other ministries. Interview with ex-minister Ehsan Zia #94 dated 19.05.2012

¹⁰⁷ Donors contributed US \$351,675,696. They included: Australia, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and UNHCR (UNDP 2012).

brief is broader than the discussion here where I briefly look at its history to highlight its facilitating role in creating the district level assemblies.

The NABDP has been implemented in three phases so far. The first phase between April, 2002 and December, 2005 did not include institution-building as a key component. The broader framework of the NABDP, according to the MRRD, was referred to in President Karzai's speech at the first International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, held in Tokyo in January 2002.¹⁰⁸ The programme was led by UNDP in the first phase; later it transferred the leadership to the MRRD and continued in a supporting role (MRRD 2004:4; UNDP 2012). The second phase of the programme (February 2006 - 2008) coincided with the period when the NSP had already created the Community Development Councils (CDCs) in the villages. The idea of District Development Assemblies emerged as a result of seeking ways to connect the CDCs to district governance institutions (MRRD 2004). In the second phase, institution building became a priority and 137 DDAs were established across the country. By 2014, the programme had registered 388 DDAs across all 34 provinces.¹⁰⁹ Most of the established DDAs managed to develop the district-level Development Plans (MRRD 2006:6). The MRRD built a partnership between two of its programmes (NSP and NABDP) by linking the NSP's facilitating partners (NGOs) with the DDAs as partners (MRRD 2014). The NGOs played a similar role in facilitating the DDAs in the same districts where they were involved in building the village level councils.¹¹⁰

DDA members are elected through the CDC clusters. Similar to CDC members at the village level, they are not paid any salary. This created tensions, especially when parallel councils were established whose members were salaried by institutions such as the IDLG. According to NSP facilitators, initially the plan was that CDCs and DDAs should be non-governmental civil society institutions, but the MRRD insisted on an emphasis on their governing role.¹¹¹

In the third phase of the programme (2009-2015), 'local institutional development' became a priority, and the idea of building governance institutions for the purposes of

¹⁰⁸ This speech was also referred to by Ashraf Ghani as the framework for the NSP's establishment. More on this in the following section (MRRD 2004:4).

¹⁰⁹ The number of DDAs exceeded the actual number of districts on record according to the IDLG who claimed that formally there are 364 districts with 9 others still in the process of being formally recognised. In some cases there is still a lack of verified boundaries (Mielke 2007; Nixon 2008). Interview with Deputy IDLG Barna Karimi #1 03.08.2011; Interview with ISAF embedded at IDLG #83 dated 10.04.2012; (MRRD 2014).

¹¹⁰ Interview with DACAAR staff #124 dated 11.06.2012.

¹¹¹ Interview with development practitioner from UN-H #87 dated 18.04.2012.

‘stabilisation and governance’ became more visible in this programme intervention (MRRD 2014). This may have been due to an increasing interest the MRRD had (by 2009) in playing a leading role in the ‘ownership’ of local governance’s at the national level and the conflict that emerged as the IDLG started its own initiative establishing new district level councils formed by the Afghan Social Outreach Programme through patronage networks at the districts.¹¹²

There is a strong emphasis on gender in the DDA institution building model which has led to women’s participation in the DDAs. However, the degree of this varies according to socio-cultural characteristics and the context and security of districts; while in some cases women have benefited from their participation, (explored further in chapters six and seven), in other cases their participation was purely symbolic. Often, although many women’s names appear on the list of ‘elected female DDA members’, only a few actually participate in the DDA meetings. This was evident in the two districts studied in Nangarhar and Bamyan. Saltmarshe and Medhi (2011) summarise the different status of the DDAs in various parts of the country:

(...) In Laghman they [DDAs] had a coordinating role in the NSP process; in Daykundi they were moribund; in Helmand their role had been eclipsed by ASOP’s District Community Councils; and in Wardak the unstable security situation led DDA members to conceal their identity or flee to Kabul. However, in Samangan DDAs were present in all districts and were used and supported by NGOs who encouraged female participation, though problems of distance and a lack of offices inhibited their operation. They were also active in Sar-i-Pul, but mostly in WFP-related activities. (...) In Jawzjan they were most active and a number of NABDP funds were being disbursed... (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011:36)

What is seen in the operationalisation of the DDAs around the country is the fact that its role in service delivery and access to economic resource distribution has become more visible than its role as a governance institution; and that its governing role has been contested by internal (within government) and external (anti-government) forces. In the following two chapters, I present an in-depth analysis of the formation and operation of DDAs in the districts of Behsud (Nangarhar) and Yakawlang (Bamyan). As the following chapters will reveal further, the DDAs have been received by the district and village elites and *de facto* governance institutions and actors as an important source of

¹¹² More on the IDLG’s programme in the following section of this chapter.

resource distribution; hence the leadership and its activities were practically taken over by key district level elites or those loyal to them.

5.2.3. *Debates on the effectiveness and impacts of NSP*

The NSP has generated a significant body of literature, which studies various dimensions of its effectiveness and impacts. This literature varies from naively positive and celebratory writings to some very critical work and more nuanced and context-specific accounts (Boesen 2004; Kakar 2005; Barakat et al. 2006; Noelle-Karimi 2006; Brick 2008; Nixon 2008; Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Kamal 2010; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2010; Beath et al. 2013; Monsutti 2012). For instance, the programme was widely covered in the media as a justification for international interventions in Afghanistan, particularly when donors were frustrated by President Karzai and the widespread corruption and inefficiency of the government. Kamal (2010) for instance, termed the NSP's councils as 'wise council' from 'quiet corners' of the country and an example of flourishing democracy (Kamal 2010). Boesen (2004) highlighted the NSP's role in redrafting customary power relations, although she admits that, in parts, the CDCs have "reproduced customary structures of local governance". Nevertheless, she says, although it is a democracy introduced 'from above', it fosters democratic processes at the local levels (Boesen 2004:2; 39-40). Noelle-Karimi pointed out the importance of the programme in terms of shortening the 'perceptual distance' between Kabul and regions or rural communities (Noelle-Karimi 2006:2). Brick's view is that by introducing customary village structures and actors the CDCs, instead of contributing to conflict resolution, generated more conflict in villages and she argues for a productive role for 'customary' organisations in state-building while looking at CDCs as externally imposed organisations (Brick 2008). Nixon (2008) looks into the NSP in the broader context of local governance, examining the programme's origins and design and addressing its challenges in terms of sustainability, coherence and effectiveness in the longer term. He, like Boesen, highlights local power relations as a challenge for the NSP intervention and advocates for a 'coherent strategy' that incorporates 'shared vision' on sub-national governance arrangements (Nixon 2008). Kakar and Azarbaijani-Moghaddam looked specifically at the gender aspects of the programme, highlighting how it affected (or not) local level gender relations through its gender conditionality and providing women-focused projects (Kakar 2005; Azarbaijani-Moghaddam 2010). Following an anthropological approach, Monsutti looks at the NSP as an element of a much broader conceptual and bureaucratic apparatus that aims to promote new forms of "transnational governmentality" that, he says, coexists with "territorialised expressions of state power and sovereignty" (Monsutti 2012:278).

Another set of questions concerns whether the structures and institutions created by the NSP will last beyond their donor funded project cycles. This partly depends on international funding commitments, but it also upon the way local elites influence these institutions through their patronage networks (Suhrke 2006; Rubin 2006). In the national political arena, institution building and resources provision have become important instruments for newly emerged national political elites looking to extend their influence. Both MRRD programmes depend on donor funding for their continuation (Suhrke 2006:1). The NABDP is planned to continue until 2015, 'coordinating and facilitating' the 'capacity development' of the DDA members. Given the broader peace-building interests exhibited by donors through their support of other programmes, the NABDP has added conflict resolution to DDAs' mandates.

At the national level, in an attempt to address problems of coordination and competition between the IDLG and MRRD's conflict, an inter-ministerial agreement was signed in December 2013. According to this, the DDAs and the IDLG's councils are to merge into a new structure (still unrecognised in law) known as District Coordination Councils (NABDP 2014). Although this appears to have 'resolved' the conflict at the national level, the operationalisation in each district will be uneven and almost certainly problematic in some cases.¹¹³ The NSP, too, is planning to complete full coverage of all Afghan villages by 2015. In its third phase, the programme aims to "continue to develop the capacities of CDCs to operate as the people's representatives at the village-level and to enable them to assume the mandate of the Village Councils foreseen in the Constitution" (NSP 2013). The NSP remains the most publicised programme among donors, with the highest budget and flag-ship status. Nevertheless, both the village level CDCs and the district level DDAs continue to, unsurprisingly, be shaped by local political networks.¹¹⁴ However, the continuation of CDCs and DDAs beyond the current programme funding and provision of block-grants as a local governance structure, seems unlikely at the time of writing.

5.3. The Independent Directorate for Local Governance: from top down to bottom up governance?

By 2007, international intervention in Afghanistan had reached its fifth year. Various different factors had shaped the emergence of sub-national governance as an international and Afghan government priority. They included: changes in US military policy; the growth of insurgency/re-emergence of the Taliban; failure of top-down state-

¹¹³ See **chapter six** section 6.4.2.

¹¹⁴ See **chapters six** and **seven** for further evidence on this point.

building and problems associated with reform-resistant ministries; intra and inter-ministerial tensions related to resource distribution and funding between government ministries and, to some extent, the interest of political leadership in the slow pace of reform due to political dealings and compromises; and the failure of bureaucratic institutions to deliver services efficiently. All these factors contributed to the creation of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG).

This section assesses the different factors that led to the establishment of the IDLG and the operationalisation of its work in two different forms: its relations with donors and the justification of its programmes through decentralisation discourses, whilst in practice strengthening national elite patronage networks. The section highlights the roles of individual actors in negotiating local governance 'ownership' matters with actors within the government and beyond.

5.3.1. Factors behind the emergence of the IDLG

The IDLG was established in August 2007,¹¹⁵ by which time the Bonn Agreement international commitments had been declared 'over'. On paper, Afghanistan was considered to have a legitimate state, a written constitution, an elected president and parliament, and the process of donor funded institution-building was ongoing. International donors were in search of 'best practices' to find out how better their internationally committed funding could be used to reach people beyond Kabul and other major city boundaries. The international military had a mandate to move from an 'enemy-centred' to a 'population centric' approach and sought to 'expand the legitimacy of the central government to the regions and enhance security' (Lister 2007:8; van Bijlert 2009). As such, it was looking for a government institution to partner with that could take over the governance role once they had 'cleared' the area of 'enemies'.

The history of the IDLG's formation and its work on local governance is presented here as a contrasting case to the MRRD. It shows how transnational agendas such as 'good governance', decentralisation and foreign military's COIN interests in the form of 'population centric' warfare combined with the newly emerged central government's interest in strengthening a patrimonial system of rule in order to build stronger relations between the local population and central government whilst avoiding or bypassing the influence of regional strongmen. On the surface, all three (international donors, foreign military's COIN and central government's agendas) appear similar and yet, at times, were in conflict with each other. The IDLG as a sub-national governance institution

¹¹⁵ The presidential decree for the establishment of the IDLG was signed by President Karzai on August 30th 2007 (Nixon 2008:2).

became a platform to meet the competing interests of all parties involved. It took the lead in building institutions and strengthening loyalties between district and village actors and the central government. On the one hand it was seen as an instrument to decentralize power and bring government 'closer to the people', and yet on the other it was viewed by government protagonists as a means to concentrate power. In this section, I start by elaborating the different sets of interests and actors involved including the presidential palace, donor institutions such as the World Bank, the UNDP and the international military's COIN strategy. The IDLG became a point of convergence for these different actors as explored below. This is followed by looking at the IDLG's role in district and village governance in terms of its policies and practical interventions.

Justifications for the IDLG varied from enhanced decentralisation to the need to strengthen patronage networks. For instance, in 2007-2008 there were at least three reports or assessments carried out by organisations such as the World Bank (2007), The Asia Foundation (2007) and the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit¹¹⁶ (a donor-funded research organisation). All highlighted the lack of a clear government strategy on sub-national governance, the lack of a sub-national governance policy, the existence of duality in the way government worked (i.e. through formal and/or informal patronage networks), the lack of clarity in the process of appointment of provincial and district governors, and the need in the overall administration for reform at the sub-national level. All three papers emphasised building institutional capacity in terms of fiscal and financial, political, and public administration and overall governance relations.

The central government, on the other hand, was dealing with its own challenges with regard to sub-national governance. As the central government started to gain strength, the central authorities were not in favour of leaving sub-national governance to provincial or regional strongmen. In some cases, President Karzai managed to move individuals to positions in Kabul (for example, Ismail Khan who used to be governor of Herat) while in other cases he failed (for example, Governor Atta in Balkh). There was no clear mechanism for the appointment of provincial and district governors and chiefs of police other than it was all handled through the Ministry of the Interior (Lister 2007; van Bijlert 2009). This meant that depending on whether or not the Ministry of the Interior was an ally of the president, the president had – or did not have – any direct authority over sub-national authority appointments. This became more important as the

¹¹⁶ See, for example, Lister (2005), Lister & Nixon (2006) and Nixon (2008).

president began to think of running for a second term (Giustozzi and Orsini 2009:1).¹¹⁷ Hence, it could be argued that the president and his team's motivation to support the IDLG's establishment was to strengthen patronage based networks across the country and bring them under his direct influence. Technically, the staff of the IDLG were a combination of government bureaucrats, including the Deputy Minister of Administrative Affairs of the Mol and the Deputy Director of the Provincial Council of the Office of Administrative Affairs (OAA) who formed the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) organisational structure (IDLG 2008). Ghulam Jelani Popal was appointed as its director.¹¹⁸ The appointment (by the president) of a person with a political background (unrelated to Mujahiddin groups), who also had very extensive and current linkages in the provinces through his NGO experience and good relations with donors (Suhrke 2011:126) and international community, was undoubtedly not accidental.¹¹⁹ It was said in some circles that Popal convinced the president that if he was given the leadership of the IDLG, he would form 'an army of forty thousand men' in his support.¹²⁰ The informant added that Popal's aim was not literally to form such an 'army', but he wanted to ensure that the president realised that an institution such as the IDLG had the potential to strengthen his own patronage network across the country, bypassing the warlords, strongmen and other influential figures. As Lister (2007) pointed out, the MRRD was practically taking over district and village governance through its national programmes of building institutions and channelling service provision. While this was seen by some (especially donors) as reasonable given the ministry's ability to carry out these programmes, others saw it as 'power-grabbing' (Lister 2007:10). This 'power grabbing' factor, as discussed in the earlier section, was also related to Minister Atmar's desire to build his own patronage networks.¹²¹ Another important factor on the government, and particularly, the

¹¹⁷ Humayoon (2010) provides an extensive account of how President Karzai managed to win the second round elections through national rather than international support and in this, political actors and indeed sub-national governance structures were crucial.

¹¹⁸ Popal is a technocrat belonging to one faction of the Afghanistan Social Democrat Party (more commonly known as Afghan Milat), a Pashtun nationalist party with decades of presence in the Afghan political arena. Popal worked for over two decades with international aid agencies through the Afghanistan Development Agency (ADA) a non-political NGO that he founded in the 1990s. He joined the post-2001 government with different senior posts at the Ministry of Finance and later with the president's office.

¹¹⁹ In the earlier years of the Karzai administration, most of the people connected to the regime were either linked to Mujahiddin leaders or technocrats arriving from the west; a third group who found their familiarity with context and most updated information and networks throughout Afghanistan were people like Atmar, Popal, Stanikzai, etc. The president kept them close to him because he saw them as close allies he could trust and use in certain times. They have certainly been helpful in attracting international resources for development in Afghanistan.

¹²⁰ Based on conversations with a civil society member who was close to Mr. Popal. #65 dated 30.02.2011.

¹²¹ See sub-section 5.2.2. in this chapter.

president's side was the fact that formal institutions were seen to be too bureaucratic, less amenable to direct control and slower to deliver results than informal, personalized networks:

President Karzai was not highly in favour of a programme like this [the NSP]. He is more interested in the traditional and tribal forms of governance.¹²²

As his June, 2014 interview with *The Atlantic* highlighted, he often relied on informal patronage networks rather than his own government's staff (Mashal 2014). These factors led to the president's agreement to Popal's proposal to form the IDLG as an independent directorate operating directly under the president's leadership. President Karzai relied on Popal, who was joined by Barna Karimi, then the deputy chief of staff of the president's office and a seasoned Afghan-American technocrat, who according to some spoke the language of US business schools, to operationalise the work of the IDLG and seek funding for it. The combination of Popal and Karimi was a perfect choice as one brought local and contextual expertise of how things worked on the ground, while the other was able to turn those ideas into the language of donors and institutions in order to gain financial and political support for the institution.

Various international organisations supported sub-national governance, including the World Bank, the UN and the Asia Foundation, and some of them were happy to support the IDLG. Others, like the World Bank, were already engaged with the MRRD's work and so they were less interested, but UNDP, for instance, financed the Afghanistan Sub-national Governance Programme (ASGP) through one of its country office departments and the MRRD's National Area Based Development Programme (ANBDP) through another. The ASGP funded the overall process of the IDLG's establishment and the Sub-national Governance Policy formulation process.¹²³ By 2006, the international military forces found themselves under increasing pressure from the insurgency. The United States, as the largest donor involved in Afghanistan's reconstruction, increased its funding from \$40 million (2004) to \$1 billion in 2010, 60% of its funding being channelled through the Department of Defence. The US military's counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy required the military forces to seek shortcuts in order to ensure stability in areas under their control and one such was often their reliance on existing patronage-based networks in the country, especially at district and village levels (van Bijlert 2009). Hence, for the US military focusing on stabilisation and

¹²² Interview with ex-minister of MRRD Ehsan Zia #94 dated 12.05.2012; (Mashal 2014).

¹²³ In 2008, I worked as a UNDP Programme Officer; ASGP was one of the programmes in my portfolio. This analysis is based on my experience.

outreach to the sub-national level, particularly in areas with no or weak government presence, an institution like the IDLG was a more suitable choice than going through the MRRD's 'legal rational bureaucratic' institutions that took much longer to create.¹²⁴ The military's 'population centric' approach to counterinsurgency involved the increased mobilisation of development programmes to support stabilisation objectives. In part, this policy shift was about focusing on "accountable, capable, and visible" district level administration as part of expanding the central government's legitimacy (Brown 2012:4). This increasing attention to district governance was translated by the military into provision of large scale support to districts and, in search of national partners, they decided that the IDLG would be the best option as both had a shared interest in patronage networks, although perhaps for different purposes.

Similar to the MRRD, the IDLG also operated through different donor-funded programmes. These programmes included the Afghanistan Local Government Facility Development Programme, Performance Based Governor's Fund, Strengthening Provincial Administration and Service Delivery, Regional Afghan Municipality Programme for Urban Population, Afghanistan Sub-National Governance Programme and the Social-Outreach Programme (SOP) for forming district councils (IDLGa 2014; IDLGb 2014). It should be noted that some of these programmes (such as SOP) were only pilot initiatives and no longer operational in 2012. The overall budget for the IDLG between 2013-2014 was reported to be \$35,536,163 (Ministry of Finance 2014:53).

In sum, it was the convergence of all these different motivations and competing interests that led to the establishment of the IDLG as an independent directorate, whose leadership was able to bypass parliamentary approval and whose head was directly under the president's command. Since its establishment, the IDLG has managed to carry out both the formal track of Sub-national Governance Policy formulation, implementation of different donor-funded programmes and distribution of resources in districts and provinces, as well as expanding President Karzai's patronage network through district and provincial governor appointments and governors' direct reporting channelled through IDLG to the president. In this way, an informal centralisation process is officially funded through decentralisation and good governance programme interventions.

¹²⁴ See **chapters six** and **seven** on how PRTs and in general the DoD have supported the Afghan Social Outreach Programme to create a district council through the 'notable' figures picked by district governors.

5.3.2 IDLG's formal track: district and village governance

One of the first steps taken by IDLG was to formulate Afghanistan's Sub-national Governance Policy. In part this policy was a reaction by the IDLG leadership towards the MRRD's attempts under Minister Atmar's leadership to formalise its own ministry's local governance interventions at village and district levels (Lister 2007:10; Nixon 2008:53). But before going into further detail about the parts of the policy that discussed district and village governance, it is important to appreciate the wider events at the time (Li 2007; Kelly 2009): 2009 marked an important year for policy shifts, particularly with regard to local and sub-national governance in Afghanistan (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011). The USA, the largest donor in the country, had just elected a new administration under Barak Obama who had promised Americans in his election campaign a military surge that would first escalate US engagements in Afghanistan, followed by withdrawal of the troops. This was interpreted by some as a shift in US policy (Brown 2012). In Afghanistan, too, the second presidential election was to be held in September with President Karzai planning to run for re-election. Thus, there were strong local and international imperatives to formulate the Sub-National Governance Policy. The international needs were mainly to do with military goals of focusing on stability, while for the Afghan government, in particular for the president, it was to have a closer and more direct eye on district and provincial governors. Although, according to the IDLG official leading the process of policy formulation, the policy came about as a result of "extensive consultation with people across the country as well as with government officials",¹²⁵ a quick overview of it indicates a significant level of confusion and lack of clarity that demonstrates just how divorced it is from local practices and needs in the field.

The Asia Foundation carried out a 'consultation' survey on the draft of the IDLG's policy and produced a superficial and hasty report based on a quantitative survey in eight regions. This supposedly revealed 93% support for the, as yet, untested Sub-national Governance Policy and congratulated the IDLG on the 'accuracy' of the nascent document.¹²⁶ The survey did not address the existing conflict and issues (at that time) regarding 'ownership' of local governance affairs between the ministry of economy, the MRRD and the IDLG. In a nutshell, surveys like can be seen as an attempt to gain further 'legitimacy' for IDLG policies in order to ensure donors' funding and satisfaction. The SNG Policy is a lengthy 415 page document. A review of the village governance

¹²⁵ Interview with Jelani Popal ex-director of IDLG #85 dated 12.04.2012.

¹²⁶ The Asia Foundation report concluded after 25 pages that "Conclusively, we would like to congratulate IDLG on completing draft policy with such accuracy to achieve 93% agreement by the sub-national stakeholder's consultations" (TAF 2008:25).

section reveals the policy's lack of clarity as it presents goals and 'benchmarks' that are neither realistic nor achievable in their defined time-frames. van Bijlert (2009) rightly points out that the IDLG followed two aspects of sub-national governance agenda in its work: the technical or administrative, and the political (van Bijlert 2009). On the political side, it mainly focused on 'outreach programmes'. Interestingly, despite the fact that the outreach programmes were creating new sub-national governance structures, there is no mention of them in the policy document (*ibid.*:15). Instead, the policy described how the MRRD's established councils at district and villages would transition to 'civil society' once the constitutionally defined District and Village Councils were established by 2011: "When the Constitutionally-mandated Village Councils are elected, CDCs may cease to exist" (IRA 2010:165). In other words, the district and village governance parts of the SNG policy were a kind of formal reaction of the IDLG leadership towards the MRRD's so-called 'power grabbing' (Lister 2007). Saltmarshe and Medhi (2011) highlight the inconsistencies of the document, caught between trying to decentralise responsibilities and the fear of losing control over the local governance relations that is in place at sub-national level (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011:10). The policy does not even have a clear definition of the 'village'.¹²⁷ The policy also presents a mixed and confused image of 'village institutions' and 'village actors': it failed to highlight the 'new' actor created by the IDLG's order through district offices, the *qaryadar* or village administrator; the list of responsibilities delegated to village councils was identical to those of district and provincial governors; and it completely overlooked the collective nature of village leadership in its attempt to formalise village governance institutions.

Gender and women's inclusion in male-dominated sub-national governance relations has been a tricky question for the IDLG. The policy reserves 25% of the provincial and municipal council memberships for women, but goes on to state that if women are 'not available' to contest them, these seats will go to men (IDLG 2010:18). Nor does it provide a quota for women in the mayoral seats or on village councils (*ibid.*). The policy does keep the debate open for reconsideration at a later stage, but according to some, this half-hearted attempt is typical of the government's deliberate manoeuvring to rely on traditional and patronage networks to which women have no or very limited access.¹²⁸ In contrast, as earlier pointed out, the MRRD, at least on paper and to some extent in practice, has been more precise and serious about women's inclusion in their programme interventions.

¹²⁷ For further elaboration on this point, see **chapter four**, section 3.

¹²⁸ Interview with a gender and development expert who was part of the discussions #131 dated 27.06.2012.

The IDLG policy's ambiguity and its unrealistic and inconsistent quality is also a good example of the way 'technical' experts operate in 'post-war' contexts where assumptions are made based on unrealistic or old data rather than ground realities, existing power dynamics, etc. As already noted, the policy's twin purposes were to encourage donors to fund the IDLG's work through notions of 'good governance', democratisation and decentralisation and to simultaneously strengthen the president's office's control over sub-national governance through a centralised system of patrimonial rule (van Bijlert 2009).

5.3.3 The IDLG's informal track or unwritten rules on district and village governance

As already noted, the international military's COIN strategy found a common interest with the IDLG in building up the patrimonial system of rule. The presence of American Special Forces and NATO/ISAF in provincial capitals, districts and villages led to their increased interest in sub-national governance relations for two reasons: intelligence gathering from civilians and influential figures (Baker 2007), and using development assistance and reconstruction funds as a means for 'winning hearts and minds' and in military terms for the purpose of what they called 'force protection' (Baker 2007).¹²⁹ Based on the 'population centric' approach by international security forces a significant part of development funding was allocated to the international military forces. The military was to seek partnership with civilian parts of the government that could help them support the expansion of the Afghan state's legitimacy. For this purpose, the ISAF forces, with their nationwide presence, stationed their representatives as 'embeds' within the key ministries in Kabul, liaising between the forces and the central government.¹³⁰ For instance, an ex-PRT commander who twice served in Nangarhar was an ISAF embed at the IDLG during the period of this research. According to her, the international military forces had a wider presence across the country than the government. This meant that ISAF was in a much stronger position and had much better contact with both *de facto* and *de jure* governing actors at the sub-national level than the government, and that ISAF worked to ensure alliances with those recognised by the central government:

Sometimes it also happens that we suggest to the central government to change a governor or district governor, although we know this is the job of GIROA and the president to do that. But because we have a wide-spread

¹²⁹ Interview with an ISAF civilian advisor #82 05.04.2012.

¹³⁰ Interview with a civilian advisor at NATO HQ in Kabul #81 dated 31.03.2012.

presence, we feel it necessary to send our feedback on the practices of local government representatives.¹³¹

Although ISAF and the PRTs did have working relationships with the MRRD, given that the MRRD's approaches were more development-oriented and seen to be slow and bureaucratic, something that military logic could not afford, they relied more on the IDLG's role in local governance. One example of IDLG and international military cooperation was the formation of the Social Outreach Programme (SOP) councils. The councils were not directly created by the international military, but at the district level the PRTs relied mostly on the district governor and members of these councils and in some instances the councils were used by international military forces to help form local militia. Suhrke et al. (2009) pointed out that the IDLG's interest in forming the district level councils through this programme was around building relations between the 'traditional' leaders and central government while the international military and ministry of interior (by this time led by Minister Atmar) were looking for mechanisms to allow them to form *arbaki* or local militias (Miakhel 2012:53; Hakimi 2014:396). According to the IDLG, members of Social Outreach councils were working with district and provincial governors on 'development, security and governance improvement' (Suhrke et al. 2009:19). They note that the programme gave the *maliks* (traditional community leaders) the legal status to serve as 'community representatives' liaising with the government (*ibid.*).

The Social Outreach Programme is US funded and is closely linked to the COIN strategy where its focus has been on the districts considered unstable. Within the SOP, there is a multi-donor funded initiative known as the District Delivery Programme (DDP).¹³² This initiative is funded by the British and Danish, both at national level (the IDLG Office) for oversight and in Helmand PRTs where they delivered support to districts that were 'cleared' after military operations.¹³³ Saltmarshe and Medhi identify the purpose of DDP (similar to SOP) as providing support to local populations via government services as a broader part of COIN strategy (Saltmarshe and Mehdi 2011). SOP councils were created under district governors' guidance and members were selected through varying criteria depending on each governor's position and linkages within villages under his jurisdiction. In some areas the international military had a direct presence during the SOP councils' elections in sessions, while in others only

¹³¹ Interview with ISAF embed at IDLG #83 dated 10.04.2012

¹³² Interview with DFID lead on supporting Stabilisation and Governance #125 dated 18.06.2012

¹³³ The UK provided £4 million, supplemented by £1.8 million from the Danish government from 2010-2012. (DFID 2012)

IDLG representatives and the district governor were involved.¹³⁴ A civilian advisor at ISAF/NATO headquarters explained their overall interest in issues of rural development and local governance as a threat avoidance strategy, hoping that by providing development assistance to people they would ‘win’ over them(Ibid).

The international justification for building various forms of ‘local’ councils, ‘*shuras*’ or ‘*jirgas*’ (depending on context) on the basis on ‘traditional’ or ‘tribal’ mechanisms is that the Afghan state is perceived to be ‘external’ or ‘illegitimate’ and conversely any form of ‘local’ structure, is seen to be automatically more embedded and legitimate (Dorransoro 2014). Hence, the military, as well as other international institutions, allocated millions in funds for creating ‘local’ or ‘traditional’ structures.¹³⁵ Saltmarshe and Medhi indicate that the Social Outreach councils are the “sole formal organisations to fulfil the role of district representation”, however, only a paragraph prior to this, they write about the District Development Assemblies (DDAs) and how they intend “to take on a growing role in district governance” (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011). Their observation of identifying both as district governance representatives is correct, as in most districts both exist in parallel. However, what is missing from their analysis is how one is a more ‘formal’ representative than the other. Both the MRRD and IDLG sponsored interventions are donor funded, one by followers of the development oriented approach and the other by builders of patrimonial system logic. And if one follows the constitutional argument, none of the structures they have built at district and village levels could be considered in any way or form ‘formal’.

As discussed in an earlier section, the IDLG has followed different strategies in order to expand its institutional footprint in terms of ‘ownership’ of local governance. In a way, the establishment of the Social Outreach councils could be seen as an example of the IDLG’s attempts to regain the district council authority from the MRRD’s DDAs and trying to limit the DDAs’ work to purely development. Also, the IDLG continued its active debates and lobbying at the national level through the inter-ministerial local governance working group chaired by Senior Minister Amin Arsala. At the same time, at village level, as the elected village councils were yet to be established, IDLG took certain actions – less spoken about in Kabul – such as formalising the *qaryadar* positions. During 2010 most district governors’ offices were asked to add a village

¹³⁴ For instance, in Helmand, the DFID sponsored SOP councils were formed on a ‘different’ model to those in the east. (DFID wanted to introduce their model across the country but the pilot project ended in 2012.) Interview with DFID lead on supporting stabilisation and governance #125 dated 18.06.2012

¹³⁵ In Dorransoro’s view, this also includes the community *shura* buildings since the 1980s through the NGOs that was further intensified in the post-2001 context by the military.

affairs sub-directorate (*moderyat-e-qaryajat*) to their *tashkeel* or organisational/administration structure. This sub-directorate was tasked with 'registering' village administrators or *qaryadars* through a formal and legal procedure.¹³⁶ A *qaryadar* in this context is assumed to be the individual representing the village. He was asked to bring a petition signed by a number of village elders to confirm his position as a *qaryadar*. The lengthy job description for this position includes the same formal duties previously carried out by *maliks*. The petition was then sent to the district court for verification and once attested, the person formally registered in the sub-directorate as the village administrator or *qaryadar*. This move by the IDLG was first of all, an important policy shift from what the formal track of its practices indicated in the Sub-national Governance Policy, where it identified the village council as its village administration.¹³⁷ By formalising an individual's role as village administrator, it clearly undermined the collective nature of the village council to take up the administrative responsibilities for the village. The selection mechanism for the village administrator is also vague, unclear and confusing, at least currently at the field level.¹³⁸

The IDLG officials in Kabul were in a state of denial (during the field research period 2011/2012) about this attempt undermine village councils and the existing CDCs:

We are not aware of any such actions; they may be carried out locally by the governors or local administrations. For us, the head of this council [Village Council] administratively is registered with the village affairs officers at district level. This is useful, for example if there is a case of an arrest warrant for someone hidden in the village, the district does not need to send a military operation unit, they get in touch with the head of the VC and he'll be in charge of handing over the person.¹³⁹

The role that Mr Karimi explained is precisely what historically (and indeed presently) is carried out by *maliks*. However, historically, *maliks* were selected by the *khans* who were often the sole elites in the village; in the present context, there are multiple actors with contested interests at the village level and it is not difficult for a person to present a

¹³⁶ See the following **chapters six** (6.3.2.) and **seven** (7.3.2.) for further details on how this office operates in the contexts of Nangarhar and Bamyan districts.

¹³⁷ The policy at one point, clearly considers the *malik*'s role unofficial: "Yet any authority *maliks* may be given is not considered official" (IDLG 2010:12;71).

¹³⁸ Interview with district official in Nangarhar #80 dated 17.03.2012; Interview with sub-director of village affairs in Bamyan #18 dated 24.08.2011

¹³⁹ Interview with IDLG leadership member Barna Karimi #01 dated 03.08.2011.

paper with a few signatures to claim his *malik* or *qaryadar* position. This has already begun to create more confusion and conflict.¹⁴⁰

5.3.4. Patrimonial assemblages and local governance and its future

One important factor affecting issues around local governance interventions by central government that this chapter has demonstrated is the role of individuals in processes of local governance policy formulation and implementation on the ground. These diverse groups and individuals have used their 'assets', whether language and technical skills, contacts and networking skills or access to patronage networks and power-brokers across the country, to maintain an increasing level of control or central government influence over local governance relations. These actors, who developed close relations with international organisations as well as the president's inner circle, played a significant role in shaping the government's sub-national governance interventions. In the case of the IDLG, there were different phases in which such individual roles became more visible in the actions that the institution have taken. For instance, though the IDLG's leadership met donors' concerns by hiring international consultants and allowing an ISAF/NATO embed to the IDLG, at the same time they used IDGL networks across the country to work on the re-election of the president (Humayoon 2010); allegedly by instructing district governors (appointed by them) to finance and facilitate the stuffing of ballot boxes in favour of one candidate.¹⁴¹

The IDLG leadership changed during the course of this period. Jelani Popal left the institution in 2010, although Barna Karimi remained as acting director. Later in 2011 Karimi, too, left for an international diplomatic post as the ambassador to Canada, later leaving the government for private sector. The new director of the IDLG, Abdul Khaliq Farahi (since 2011), was another very close ally of President Karzai who served as ambassador to Pakistan, and had been taken hostage by the Taliban at one point (BBC News 2010). This senior post was a reward for him and he was seen as a trustworthy figure with the departure of two key figures (Popal and Karimi). One of the two deputy director posts was given to Matin Bek, the 26 year old (in 2012) son of Abdul Mutalib

¹⁴⁰ See following **chapters six** and **seven** for further elaboration on this point.

¹⁴¹ Full narrative of the story shared by one of the IDLG staff. He compared what he heard from a group of young boys arriving from their native district to Kabul on holiday and spending lots of money. This attracted his attention and he asked the youngsters where they got the money? They said: "We worked for the *Woleswal* during elections stuffing the boxes." In another instance the same officer found out that the IDLG office purchased expensive watches (cost approx. USS1000) and Samsung mobile phones which were given as 'gifts' to district officials in appreciation of their work for the elections. Connecting both stories, he is confident that district officials played an important role in the 2009 elections, but has no hard evidence as it was all done through the informal networks. Based on conversations with IDLG officer #136 dated 03.12.2012.

Bek, an influential Uzbek power-broker from northern Takhar province. It is said that Bek senior, who was assassinated in a suicide attack, was a strong opponent of General Dostum (Pajhwok News 2014) hence, giving Bek's son a senior position was a form of balancing the power on the president's side given the seasonal fragility in Dostum's relationship with the president.

By the end of 2015, eight years after its initiation, most of the IDLG's major external donor funded programmes are due to finish and there is an increasing pressure on the government to allocate part of the national budget to some of the non-programmatic operations of the institution (IDLG 2014a) This seems to indicate that the IDLG as an institution has a higher chance of survival despite a decrease in international funding, but the most important point of interest is how it will manage its formal and informal sub-national governance tracks with a new government under new leadership.

The way forward for the IDLG's status

In 2012 the status of IDLG was contested by parliament and some of the country's power-brokers. According to Article 64, Clause 20 of the Constitution, the president has the authority to establish commissions and institutions for the ease and smooth running of governance-related activities. However, on 19 December, 2012, members of parliament voiced their concern about the IDLG becoming "out of control and corrupt"¹⁴² and as a result of their debate in the plenary session, the majority voted for the IDLG to become a ministry so that its minister could be approved by parliament and be brought into parliament for questions. This is seen an interesting move at the time. The current president has, in constitutional terms, an enormous level of authority over 'independent' institutions. This debate over the future of the IDLG was important for two reasons: 1) as the election was getting closer, representatives or partners of potential candidates jostled for influence the institution and 2) MPs used this as a way of pressuring the president regarding their own group and party interests on matters of sub-national governance. Although President Karzai did not take this decision by parliament seriously, it remains to be seen how his successor will use the institution for local governance in the future.

5.4. A 'policy' solution: Response to the question of 'ownership'

As outlined in this chapter, the two government institutions emerged as key players in the central state's efforts to create district and village level governance structures. Both institutions attempted to increase their sphere of influence and resources in order to be

¹⁴² See the original Dari text on the official page of the Afghan Parliament for these claims: <http://wj.parliament.af/> accessed 19.12.2012

seen as the ‘owners’ of district and village councils. However, given that a large part of this competition (particularly at its ‘peak time’ i.e. in 2008-2010) was individually rather than institutionally driven, with the change of political leadership in both the MRRD and IDLG, the pace of debates and intensity of competition and conflict evolved over time. The most recent iteration of this debate, at the time of writing was an inter-ministerial working group where representatives of both institutions, the Independent Elections Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livelihoods and the Ministry of Finance chaired by senior minister on governance relations Senior Minister Amin Arsala, agreed on the ‘National Policy for Governance and Development at District and Village Level’ where both institutions agreed to ‘merge’ the ‘existing’ councils at district level where both institutions will jointly lead what will be called District Coordination Councils.¹⁴³ This policy was approved by the cabinet and as shown in the following chapter, the operationalisation of this merger is not going to be a smooth and easy process; as DDAs are more established and systematic, there is a better chance that the MRRD will lead these councils rather than sharing with the IDLG.

On matters of village governance, while the policy recognises the CDCs “To act as formal institution[s] for the government and other actors to ensure community representation and community-based governance(...) including service delivery” (IDLG and MRRD 2014:11), , the formalisation of the *qaryadar* post through district headquarters goes unmentioned. in the policy which, undoubtedly, will create issues in contexts where the position is filled by someone other than the CDC chief. In practice, however, as the following chapters reveal, this is far more complex and will continue to have consequences for the way district and village governance relations are handled. As long as the central government gives such legitimacy to different types of actors, this will create more competition and potential conflicts among different patrons who will gain strength from such recognition.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter charted the emergence and evolution of two different central government institutions (the MRRD and IDLG) responsible for district and village governance. It examined how local governance programmes have been negotiated, formulated, designed and operated. The analysis highlights the tension between efforts to build formal, democratic institutions and processes for ostensible long term developmental goals, alongside efforts to extend and consolidate patronage networks to pursue more

¹⁴³ The policy was approved by President Karzai and cabinet ministers on December 30th, 2013 (NABDP 2013).

short term sets of interests.

The chapter discussed how the formulation and design processes of these programmes were negotiated between different national and international actors and institutions, each following their own interests. The chapter also demonstrated the effect of the interplay of the personal politics by those in leadership positions at the two institutions and other government actors.

The chapter demonstrated how both institutions' programmatic interventions in local governance are donor dependent. At the same time, it was discussed that because of the IDLG's importance to the central government, particularly the president, as a hub for expanding its patronage networks across the country, in the absence or shortage of international funding, it has a much better chance of survival than the MRRD.

The chapter then demonstrated how international donors also influenced the two institutions' decisions to follow different directions. For instance, the MRRD's interventions have been more in line with the World Bank's Community Driven Development initiative for building modern institutions, while in the IDLG's case, the focus has been on the international military's counterinsurgency strategy that was 'population centric' with the purpose of 'expanding government's legitimacy'. In terms of village and district level footprints, the latter have become less visible and in certain instances, have no more tangible presence than the former.

The chapter highlighted that women's participation in the village and district councils being non-negotiable resulted in the presence of women in both structures (at village and district levels) through MRRD's interventions. However, as demonstrated in this thesis, neither the IDLG's donors nor the institution itself saw women's inclusion in district councils as a priority, because both focused on short-term reliance on patronage networks for whom inclusion of women was not a priority.

The chapter pointed out that the MRRD's efforts in general were directed towards building bureaucratic institutions while the IDLG, in terms of its district interventions for institution building, was influenced by the COIN objective of intelligence gathering and using development funds for winning hearts and minds.

Finally, looking at the historical processes of these two institutions' engagements in local governance interventions shows a complex process of interactions, negotiations, contestations and compromises between international and national actors and

institutions, each following their own interests and agendas in order to fund, influence, operationalise and implement the various programme interventions.

Chapter Six

Nangarhar: Local Governance Interventions and Local Responses



Map sources: ©BBC (left) and ©Kohistani.com (right).

6.1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce Nangarhar Province and the village of Qala-e-Janan Khan in the district of Behsud as a site of intervention, in order to study local governance relations that emerge as a result of programme interventions by two central government institutions: the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG). The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine the process and different dynamics of local power relations historically, and to identify how they have changed during the MRRD and IDLG's interventions that were built one upon the other.

Nangarhar's capital city, Jalalabad, has historically been one of the key strategic towns for any ruler of the Afghan state and its international sponsors. Its geopolitical, as well as its economic importance, in terms of revenue resources has put the provincial elites in a strong position to negotiate their interests with the central government. This chapter will first introduce the historical context of Nangarhar's governance relations in the pre and post 2001 context, and will then expand on the particular governance characteristics of the selected village and district as site(s) of interventions and by deconstructing the process of the MRRD's National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and the IDLG's programme and policy interventions at the village and district level.

The key argument of this chapter is that local governance programme and policy interventions result in changing local power dynamics as these interventions are a source of power in terms of provision of resources and establishing a legitimate form of authority. However, these interventions have not resulted in creating a sustained form of local governance institution that continues beyond the programme's life. The chapter

examines the hybrid forms of governance relations that emerge as a result of these interventions in the particular context of Qala-e-Janan Khan and Behsud.

The chapter is organised into five sections, the introduction being section one.

Section two presents Nangarhar's particular characteristics and socio-economic context, followed by a history of governance interventions and the province's pre-2001 position. In light of that historical context, I will introduce governance relations and the interplay of power dynamics at the post-2001 provincial level.

Section three provides an extensive study of the MRRD's interventions in the village of Qala-e-Janan Khan. I will initially introduce the village, outlining how the programme was introduced and implemented, and how conditionality on women's inclusion by the NSP was negotiated among village elites. To conclude this section, the intended goals and unintended consequences of the NSP intervention will be assessed.

Because these interventions are built upon each other, in section four I explore both the IDLG and MRRD's district level governance interventions. I will first introduce the district of Behsud, then analyse the MRRD's programmatic intervention in forming a District Development Assembly (DDA) and the subsequent intervention of the IDLG in forming a council through its Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP). I look at how these two parallel attempts to 'own' district councils by the MRRD and IDLG were realised in Behsud.

Section five will conclude the chapter, returning to the two key research questions: how the MRRD and IDLG interventions were received by the local elites and the way local elites bargained and negotiated to shape the programme to their own advantage.

6.2. History of governance relations in Nangarhar

6.2.1. Provincial socio-economic characteristics

Nangarhar is located in the eastern part of Afghanistan. It is mainly an ethnically Pashtun dominated province and contains one of the key commercial routes that connects Afghanistan to the south Asian sub-continent through Pakistan. Jalalabad,¹⁴⁴ the provincial capital of Nangarhar, not only serves as the centre for the political and administrative affairs of the province, but as a capital for the eastern region which includes three other provinces: Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan.¹⁴⁵ Jalalabad has always been important to Afghan and imperial rulers as the central hub for the eastern region

¹⁴⁴ See Balfour (1885) for the ancient history of Nangarhar and Jalalabad.

¹⁴⁵ The term 'Mashreqi' refers to the eastern zone that includes Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan.

and its geo-strategic position connecting Afghanistan to British India (today's Pakistan). Nangarhar has twenty-two formally approved districts.¹⁴⁶ The population of Nangarhar was some 1.436 million in 2012.¹⁴⁷ The majority of the population (1.2 million) live in rural areas and only 211,000 live in urban areas, mainly Jalalabad (CSO 2012a). The ethnic composition of the province includes 90% Pashtuns of different tribes,¹⁴⁸ 1.6% Tajiks, 2.6% Afghan Arabs,¹⁴⁹ 3.6% Pashayee and 2.1% others (CSO 2012c).

Jalalabad is also an educational hub for the larger region. There are two major public higher education institutions and several private education institutions. Apart from some of the more remote areas, most districts are covered by health and education services. Alongside the universities, there are two large religious education centres known as *darulhefaz* in the vicinity. Nangarhar's majority population are Sunni Muslims, with a small minority of Sikh Hindus who mainly reside in Jalalabad. The religious institutions include *madrasas* and mosques. There are around 5000 mosques registered with the Ministry of Pilgrimage and Religious Affairs, including grand and smaller mosques. According to different sources, these institutions are not affiliated with the government and are mainly privately funded.¹⁵⁰ It is difficult to track the actual sources of funding, especially for large *madrasas* and mosques, as no one had clear indication of sources of funding for them.

Nangarhar's sub-tropical weather and mild winters keep the province mostly fertile for agriculture during the whole year (Goodhand and Mansfield 2010:12). Agricultural activity is one of the major sources of revenues for the majority of people in the districts.

The province is considered as an economic hub and transit route for goods to and from Pakistan. Import/export taxes raised \$66 million in 2008/09 which was the second highest after Herat. One fifth of central government's total revenue is generated from sources in this province (CSO 2009:228 cited in Goodhand and Mansfield 2010:12).

¹⁴⁶ There is also a 23rd district, Spinghar, that is currently considered a district in transition and recognised as a temporary district only by a presidential decree (TLO 2010:7): Interview with IDLG official in Kabul #39 dated 17.08.2011; Interview with ex-PRT head of Nangarhar #83 dated 10.04.2012.

¹⁴⁷ After Kabul and Herat, Nangarhar is the most highly populated Afghan province (CSO 2012a).

¹⁴⁸ Major tribes in Nangarhar include Mohmand, Shenwar, Khogyani, Sapi, Jabarkheyl, Nasir, Ibrahimkhail, Hoodkhail, Kharoti, Niazi, Pashayee, and Tajiks. (NABDP 2012).

¹⁴⁹ Afghan Arabs speak Dari and are descendants of the Arabian armies that conquered Afghanistan in the 8th century (Barfield 2010:29-30).

¹⁵⁰ The government only provides salary to clergy for 174 mosques, among them 51 grand mosques and 47 smaller ones. Interview with provincial directorate of Religious Affairs #117 dated 04.05.2012.

The local elites in the province have a long history of control over the border and the taxes it generates. The Haji Qadir and Haji Din Mohammad's (former governors) families are said to have control over a considerable part of the revenues from the province (*Goodhand and Mansfield 2010*). Taxes on the movement of goods through the province are another source of revenue which, according to different sources, have been personally used by Gul Agha Shirzai during his governorship to fund reconstruction projects in Jalalabad (Rosenberg 2009; Mukhopadhyay 2009; Goodhand and Mansfield 2010).

Another characteristic of Nangarhar is the mobility of its people. Historically, Nangarhar was known as the winter residence for Kabul's elites, including the royal families, and also for *kochis* (nomads). Years of war and conflict have resulted in massive migrations, with many of Nangarhar's residents moving to refugee camps in neighbouring Pakistan.

6.2.2. Historical context of local governance relations

As discussed in **chapter four**, interventions in Afghanistan by major regional and global powers go back centuries. Nangarhar Province and, more specifically, Jalalabad has always been a core strategic location for those who sought control and rule over the region and Kabul.

Jalalabad was administratively part of Kabul Province during the late 19th century. A governor and chief of army who were appointed by the king in Kabul led the province and these leaders maintained order within their territory by relying on local traditional leaders such as *khans* and *maliks* who operated as patrons of different regions within the province (Kakar 1979:48). The eastern region (*Mashreqi*) was administered through Jalalabad until 1966 when Zahir Shah's administrative reforms divided the eastern provinces.¹⁵¹

The Nangarhar elites – those with political and economic influence in the province – have historically been considered as key actors in the national political arena because of the importance of the province to the Afghan state and indeed their power and influence for having the potential to be a close ally or a contested opponent of the Afghan state. Their economic power base results from Nangarhar's position linking Kabul with the Indian sub-continent (contemporary Pakistan), especially through commerce. The political power of Nangarhar's elite has been linked to strong tribal and

¹⁵¹ Laghman and Kunar were separated from Nangarhar in 1966 and Nuristan in 1986 during Dr. Najibullah's time. (TLO 2011:1).

other forms of solidarity and socio-political relations that enabled them to mobilise the population for or against the government (Dorrnsoro 2005). This power of elites often put them in a relatively strong position to negotiate their interests with Kabul. And for Kabul or the central government too, the economic and geo-strategic importance of the province made Nangarhar one of the key provinces whose governor had to be a close and trustworthy ally of the ruler.

In all invasions or internal struggles for power, control of Jalalabad was always crucial. For instance, the city was occupied in the 19th century by British forces during the first and second Afghan-Anglo wars (1839-42 and 1879-80). During the Soviet invasion in 1979, a military command was established near Jalalabad and it controlled the town throughout the 1980s (*ibid.*). Under the Mujahiddin and then the Taliban regimes, Pakistanis and Arabs maintained a strong presence in the area via military bases.¹⁵² Since 2001 the province has had a highly visible US military presence and is part of one of the largest Regional Command (RC) bases in eastern Afghanistan. According to local informants in Nangarhar, there are five military bases. The most important base is located at Jalalabad Airfield, from where drone operations and other activities are directed.

The direct and indirect military and political presence of international forces and especially the provision of resources through them – similar to the central state intervention – have become an instrument used by competing provincial elites to maintain their patronage based system of rule. Thus sources of power and legitimacy, whether locally generated through elite patronage networks or nationally and internationally sponsored or negotiated, have historically shaped the way governance relations operate in the province.

In **chapter four** I elaborated upon the relations, interactions and negotiations between the *khans* (traditional leaders who operate in the absence of formal government), the formal government appointees, and the clergy and religious actors and institutions. I suggested that it is these relations that illuminate the state and how it operates in Afghanistan. However, Nangarhar's post-1978 history has created a far more complex governance environment which is the result of military, political, and economic interventions during years of war. For instance, as Goodhand and Mansfield (2010) point out, control of the Pakistan border and taxes generated from goods imported via

¹⁵² There were two major military bases in Nangarhar, one located in the Darwanta area near Jalalabad, established by Hekmatyar with the help of Arabs and closed down by the Taliban in 1996 and a second one in Torabora where Osama Bin Laden was based (Dorrnsoro 2005:302; Johnson 2007:96).

this border, alongside the movement of goods through the province, have been important sources of revenue for provincial elites (Goodhand and Mansfield 2010:12). Besides this, the drug economy, linked to the overall war economy that also includes external military and financial support of warring factions during 1980-2000s, has become another primary source of revenue controlled by local elites (Dorransoro 2005:136). Politically, the emergence of new military leadership known locally as *qomandansalari* (warlordism), *topaksalari* (the rule of guns) or *pataksalari* (the rule of checkpoints for tax collections) have added further actors to the governance relations formulae that are operating locally and at district and provincial levels (Giustozzi 2009:75).¹⁵³

From 1978 to 2001, the key actors in the province were from different tribal lineages that allied themselves with the pro-government or pro-Mujahiddin groups in the anti-Soviet period. Both camps were sponsored by international rivals (i.e. the Soviets and the USA). The pro-government actors resided mainly in Jalalabad and were given privileges, positions, and opportunities to work in Jalalabad or in Kabul.¹⁵⁴ Those loyal to *Mujahiddin* groups included different *tanzims* or parties who had bases in refugee camps in Pakistan and operated military commands in different districts and villages. The key Mujahiddin parties active in Nangarhar included *Hizb-e-Islami Khalis*¹⁵⁵ (HIK), *Hezb-e-Islami Hekmatyar*¹⁵⁶ (HIG), *Jamiyate-e-Islami* (Rabbani)¹⁵⁷ and *Etehad-e-Islammi* (Sayyaf),¹⁵⁸ *Mahaz-e-Milli*¹⁵⁹ (led by Pir Sayed Ahmad Gailani). *Jabhah-e-Nijat*

¹⁵³ Also see the following sections, particularly the analysis of the village actors in Qala-e-Janana Khan, where members of the same tribe represent different actors and structures.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with a female university lecturer in Jalalabad #62 dated 02.01.2012; interview with a Russian graduate male resident of Jalalabad dated 26.11.2011.

¹⁵⁵ Khalis originally from Nangarhar, was initially a clergyman and a religious scholar (Shaikhul-Hadith); later he became one of the leading figures in the anti-Soviet occupation war. His party members include a large number of senior commanders from the Arsala family, such as Abdul Haq, who was assassinated by Taliban in 2001, Haji Qadir who served as Nangarhar governor and later as minister and was assassinated in Kabul, Haji Din Mohammad who also served as Nangarhar and later Kabul governor and many others. One of Khalis' sons, however, is known to be operating on the Taliban anti-government front too.

¹⁵⁶ Hekmatyar's key figure in Nangarhar and larger eastern zone was Mawlawi Fazil Haq Mujahid who was assassinated in 1997. Several HIG commanders are active in the province, for instance, Mawlawi Attullah Ludin who was previously an MP and replaced Gulagha Shirzai in 2013 as provincial governor for Nangarhar and another is currently an MP, Engineer Abdul Ghafar from Behsud.

¹⁵⁷ Jamiyat is mainly represented by Pashayee commander Hazrat Ali.

¹⁵⁸ Etihad was represented by several commanders, among whom the most prominent post-2001 figure is Fazil Hadi Muslimyar.

¹⁵⁹ The Mahaz and Nijat fronts mainly ruled through old Sufi networks and had their own patronage system that secured loyalty and support. Often national level candidates of these two parties got automatic votes from their followers in the province.

e-Milli (led by Sibghatullah Mujaddedi) and *Harakat-e-Inqilab-e-Islami*¹⁶⁰ (led by Mawlawi Nabi). Each of these parties was represented by commanders, some of whom became important actors in the post-2001 governance of the province.

Jalalabad remained under the People's Democratic Party (PDPA) regime until Kabul fell in 1992. In 1992, Haji Qadir (a senior commander of the Khalis faction) became governor and led the province through a joint *shura* that also had members from the other parties. Qadir maintained some relations with Jamiyat and HIG in Kabul, but this is the only period when Nangarhar's relations with Kabul were minimal (Dorransoro 2005:241).¹⁶¹

Under Taliban rule, the governor of Nangarhar was Mawlawi Kabir, and later Mullah Abdul Salam Rocketi, both of whom also acted as commander-in-chief for the eastern zone, inclusive of all four provinces.¹⁶² The Taliban ruled Nangarhar – and to some extent its districts – through alliances with junior military commanders who were not involved in mujahiddin rule (1992-1996). All the key provincial elites, including most mujahiddin commanders and other actors, retreated from the province when the Taliban captured Jalalabad.¹⁶³ Although the Taliban gained some support from religious scholars and influential mullahs, their alliance was not powerful enough to allow them expand their control beyond district headquarters more than any other centralised ruler. The most senior posts – such as provincial and district governor positions – were held by Taliban military commanders, most of whom also had a '*mullah/mawlawi*' title with their name and were external to the province.¹⁶⁴ For instance, two of the most senior Taliban who served as Nangarhar governor or commander-in-chief for the eastern zone were Mawlawi Kabir from Paktia's Zadran tribe and Mullah Rocketi from Zabul (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012:468; Dimanno 2009). From the perspective of the central authority, this was the most successful approach to ruling. Appointing an outsider maintained much stronger relations between Kabul and Nangarhar, while an insider (such as Qadir and allies, for instance) kept most of the local licit as well as illicit resources to themselves, with almost no loyalty or payment to the central government.

¹⁶⁰ During the anti-Soviet war, there were only junior commanders leading small district or village level fronts for the Harakat party. Later, during the Taliban rule, most of these commanders joined the Taliban regime.

¹⁶¹ According to Giustozzi (2009:79) the Nangarhar Shura did not officially recognise Rabbani as a legitimate president.

¹⁶² Eastern zone provinces include Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar and Nuristan.

¹⁶³ There was only one exception, Mawlawi Khalis, who was said to be giving support to the Taliban when they captured Nangarhar in 1996. (Strick van Linschoten and Kuehn 2012:471).

¹⁶⁴ Based on different informants' accounts, district commanders (governors) were appointed by the central Taliban leadership and were not native to the province. Based on anecdotes shared by local informants in Nangarhar.

At the district level, councils were formed by local mullahs and traditional *khans* and ex-mujahiddin commanders who were not loyal to the Taliban were often denied participation.¹⁶⁵

Three mujahiddin commanders who were strong US allies played an important role in toppling the Taliban regime in Nangarhar: Commander Abdul Haq who was assassinated in the initial stages; Haji Zaman Ghamsharik who later become deputy chief of police for Nangarhar;¹⁶⁶ and Hazrat Ali, a Pashayee commander who was previously with *Hizb-e-Islami Khalis*, and later joined *Jamiyat* as a chief commander for the eastern zone. As will be elaborated further, most of the iconic strongmen affiliated with different political and politico-military groups during war time have, in fact, become key post-2001 provincial political elites in the province.

6.2.3. Post-2001 Governance Characteristics

In terms of population and revenues generated, Nangarhar in the post-2001 socio-economic context has become one of the fastest growing provinces.¹⁶⁷ Rising land prices have impacted the local population's living standards, as agricultural landowners have sold parts of their land to build concrete villas. Jackson (2014) points out that the taxes collected at the Torkham border between 2012 and 2013 were approximately US \$174 million (Jackson 2014:22). Although there is no cumulative figure for overall donor funding to Nangarhar since 2002, according to one source the US government – including USAID and the military – spent \$1.1 billion across Afghanistan in 2008 and for Nangarhar, it had a combined budget of US \$150 million for the year 2009 (Mukhopadhyay 2014:221). The military's shift from counter-terrorism to counterinsurgency (COIN) in 2009 resulted in more funding and resources, especially in strategic and geopolitically important Nangarhar.

The political leadership in the last decade has evolved into coalitions linked to old regimes of the pro-Soviet PDPA, the Mujahiddin who ruled in the 1990s, and some of the Taliban or their allied groups (Roggio 2009). The Taliban are relatively active in attacking international bases and government institutions and staff, while most of the

¹⁶⁵ Based on anecdotes shared by several local informants who were living in Nangarhar during the Taliban, including residents of the village of Qala-e-Janan Khan

¹⁶⁶ Ghamsharik was assassinated in a suicide bombing in 2010 (Memmot 2010).

¹⁶⁷ Mukhopadhyay (2014) states that since 2006-7 there has been an increase in customs duty in Nangarhar from 17 to 23%. In the year 2012, there was a general increase of 8% in Afghanistan's customs duty and Nangarhar's Torkham revenue with second largest income (*Aariananews* dated 30.03.2013 (accessed online on 24.04.2013) and *Customs Mirror*, a publication of the Ministry of Finance's customs directorate: <http://customs.mof.gov.af/en/page/5658> (accessed on 24.04.2013); also see Goodhand and Mansfield (2010:12).

actors among the first two groups (PDPA and the Mujahiddin) with the addition of smaller groups and influential actors are involved in the province's leadership, in some cases in alliance while in other cases as competing forces. Although in the immediate aftermath of 2001, as a result of the Bonn Agreement, Haji Qadir returned to his position as governor of Nangarhar, he was soon followed by Haji Din Mohammed who was subsequently replaced by Gul Agha Shirzai in 2004 (originally an ex-Mujahiddin commander and then governor of Kandahar) who was initially seen as a Karzai loyalist who would quell competing rivalries in the province.

Mukhopadhyay (2014), in her extensive study of the strongman model of governance, explores the personality and characteristics of Shirzai as a 'neo-*khan*'. She argues that he was able to maintain power and political order in the province through a combination of the financial and political support of the US and central government, alongside his ability to deal with local conflict and to use tribal leaders and inter-tribal disputes to prevent opposition from emerging, thereby maintaining a political equilibrium in the districts (Mukhopadhyay 2014).¹⁶⁸

The security and stability in Nangarhar province is directly related to the underlying political settlements and alliances that local elites have made in terms of authority and resource distribution with or against the government.¹⁶⁹ For instance, Mansfield's (2013) study of the drugs economy in Nangarhar, with a particular focus on the southern districts, demonstrates how Jalalabad and northern parts of the province are considered as 'state spaces' where the local political elites are part of the overall political settlement, and are therefore different from the southern districts in terms of the challenges that provincial authorities faced during the Shirzai-led counter-narcotic campaign. The politico-military elites from the northern districts such as Dara-e-Nur, Koz-Kunar and Behsud, including Hazrat Ali and his commanders, are strong allies of the US forces and the Afghan government; the Arsala family from Surkhroad and the *khans* of Behsud and many other loyal mid and lower level commanders from the two

¹⁶⁸ See also Foschini and Ali (2013) for the most recent analysis of anti-Shirzai protests and shifting alliances of local power brokers in Nangarhar <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp?id=3365> (accessed on 25.04.2013)

¹⁶⁹ This division is also reflected in the Nangarhar Regional Development Association (NRDA)'s 'Marshal Plan' for the province. Most of the investment and development plans are focusing on districts in the northern parts of the province. See "Nangarhar Regional Development Plan: Bridging a rich past with a bright future" (date not mentioned but assumed 2007) aka "Nangarhar Inc." <http://wemeantwell.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/NANGARHAR-INC-BUSINESS-PLAN-MAR-08.pdf> (accessed on 23.03.2013)

Hezb-e-Islami (Khalis and Hikmatyar factions) are mostly working as government allies, some in key positions.¹⁷⁰

Stronger informal or de facto alliances, networks and patronage structures underpinned the formal or governmental institutions and nominally democratic processes in the province. The formal governmental posts were mostly filled by provincial elites or officials who had strong affiliations with the provincial elites, with the exception of the provincial governor's post held by Gulagha Shirzai (a strong US ally) who was appointed by the president and served as governor from 2004-2013.¹⁷¹ For instance, most of the provincial seats for both parliament houses (upper and lower) and the provincial council were accordingly filled by men, as well as women, who either directly represented a political (or politico-military) group or faction, or were sponsored by them. The economic basis for mobilising capital and supporters for voting and loyalties is often a combination of illicit economy (such as drugs, illegal taxing, etc.), funding through US contracts (mostly given to commanders in exchange for loyalty), aid funding and licit businesses.¹⁷² It is important to point out here that the two presidential and parliamentary elections held in 2004 and 2009, resulted in changed attitudes of the local population towards elections and democratisation, particularly in areas where the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was implemented. These national level elections further promulgated the patronage based politics where votes were bought directly by cash or other privileges.¹⁷³

Another factor in the democratization interventions is women's suffrage, which, so far, has been received with mixed responses. For example, despite the quota system that reserved 25% of the parliamentary and provincial council seats for women, in Nangarhar, none of the female politicians were able to succeed without being sponsored by the major provincial political elites. This has given female candidates only symbolic access to political representation, a symbolism betrayed by the fact that they operated entirely as figureheads for these major patrons.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ It has to be noted that the *Hezb-e-Islami* Hekmatyar faction is divided into several other parts, some of his loyal commanders are still operating in anti-government operations while most spliced parts operate under the "Hezb-e-Islami Party" that is registered with the Afghan government.

¹⁷¹ Shirzai's appointment as governor of Nangarhar involved different factors, including keeping him away from Kandahari (his native province) and the fact that the president wanted an 'outsider' to rule Nangarhar, not someone from its local elites. Interview with a local resident in Jalalabad #73 dated 15.03.2012.

¹⁷² Interview with Sheila Baburi (02.01.2012)

¹⁷³ This point will be explored further in the following sections.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Sheila Baburi (02.01.2012)

Although the district governors are appointed through the IDLG at a central level, in order to show his power, the governor moved the district governors from district to district on a regular basis.¹⁷⁵ The governor used the allocation of formal positions as a reward to be given to different district and provincial elites in exchange for their continued loyalty and support of the governor's political and economic interests.¹⁷⁶

This overall competition over power and resources is also partly reflected in the patterns of security incidents in the province (Foschini and Ali 2013). For instance, the security incidents in the province are divided into five categories:¹⁷⁷ i) bombings, suicide attacks and direct offensives by the Taliban and *Hizb-e-Islami* factions; ii) organised crime, such as assassinations, murders, kidnapping, sometimes carried out for economic reasons, including ransom-taking or to apply pressure to judiciary personnel in order to influence or change court decisions, hiring or firing staff, land-grabbing, etc; iii) personal or internal hostilities and disputes, largely at different levels ranging from disputes within families over property or honour, public resources such as water, etc., competitions over power positions and loyalties to political elites; iv) violent demonstrations, where people were mobilised through Nangarhar University that was reportedly influenced by the *Hekmatyar* faction's hardliners and other conservative groups; v) house raids, arrests and in certain cases aerial bombardments by the US and Coalition forces over residential areas. The nature of these acts is violent, resulting in numerous casualties. They also, especially if they involve massive civilian casualties, can cause even more unrest, demonstrations and protests.

These different forms of violent incidents directly affect the way governance relations operate in the province. Although most security incidents are labelled and linked to the Taliban, an in-depth look into every incident reveals a more complex story, where violence (of different forms) has been used by different actors (including pro and anti-government groups) in order to compete against their rivals and control the population and local leaders.

Nangarhar has been one of the major recipients of USA funding since 2001. The development funding was mainly spent on infrastructure, agriculture, livelihoods and other social services (Goodhand and Mansfield 2010:13). The US Provincial

¹⁷⁵ One example of this is shared by Behsud's governor in the following section. Interview with district governor of Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012

¹⁷⁶ See, for example, US Embassy, Kabul communication to the Secretary of State (US Embassy Kabul 2009).

¹⁷⁷ This analysis is based on personal observations and resources such as TLO (2010), CPAU (2010), Mansfield (2012); and media reports, particularly Pajhowk news updates between 2011-2012 and beyond.

Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) implemented over 300 projects in the province from 2002-2013 (*ibid.*). These include local governance and community development support in areas where the government still did not have access and CERP funding, the European Union's rural development funds, as well as various road reconstruction projects that were financed by Pakistan, China and many other countries.¹⁷⁸ As Jackson (2014) points out, undoubtedly while these massive (re)construction projects have changed the province's appearance and built its institutions, it also created winners and losers. The winners were often those who managed to use these resources in order to further strengthen their patronage networks and buy more loyalties, while the losers were those who did not benefit economically or politically from these resources. Hence, the imbalance in distribution and channelling of resources also creates instability and insecurity.

In sum, Nangarhar's governance relations in the post-2001 context are characterised by a form of neo-patrimonial system of governance. Under this system, *de facto* provincial and local elites as well as the intervening forces (including the central government and international military) institutions and actors played an important role in the way governance relations operated in the province. While, in some instances different provincial elites used violence as a means to control power and resources, in others, they worked under a complex hybrid form of system where the interests of all different factions and groups met.

¹⁷⁸ Most of major national development programmes also active in Nangarhar.

6.3. Village Governance Interventions

6.3.1. Qala-e-Janan Khan village: micro site of governance intervention

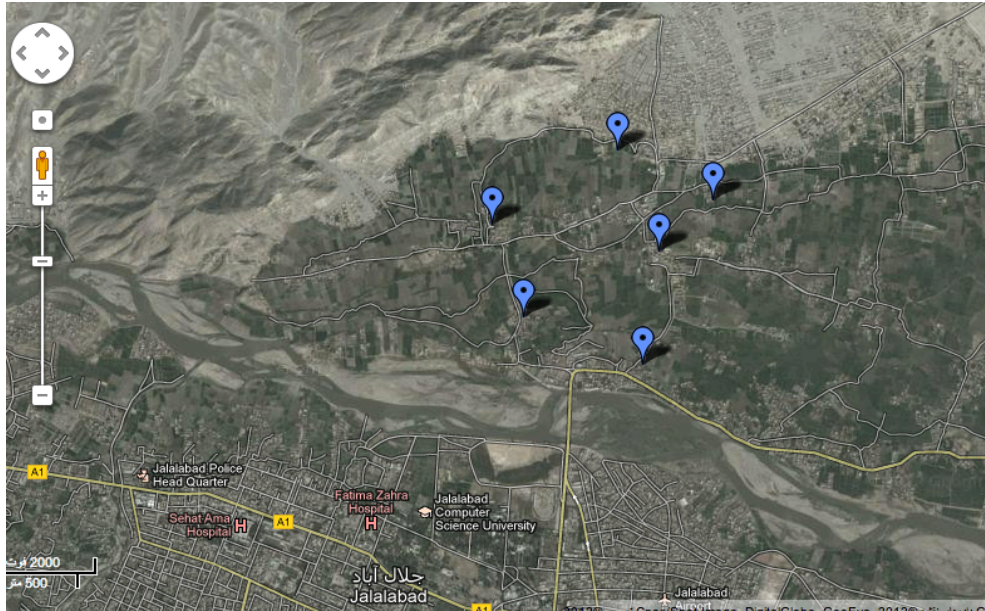


Figure 2: Map identifying Qala-e-Janan Khan and six different divisions of the village ©Google Maps

Qala-e-Janan Khan (QJK)¹⁷⁹ is located in the north-eastern part of Behsud district.¹⁸⁰ The village road entrance is through the Jalalabad-Kunar highway and the distance between the village and Jalalabad city centre is only 4-5 kilometres. The village is divided into six parts¹⁸¹ (Figure 2 shows the exact location of each). The Behsud district headquarters is approximately 16 kilometres from the village. Behsud River is located in the southern part of the village. The village has good access to water, as it is located close to the river bed. During summer 2011 (the field research period)¹⁸² it was observed that a small part of the village space was still used for agricultural purposes, while the selling of land¹⁸³ and building of new concrete villas was on the rise in the area. Almost all of the village roads are gravelled, although most are still quite bumpy,

¹⁷⁹ I will use QJK as a short name for Qalal-e-Janan Khan in this section.

¹⁸⁰ It borders Qasimabad and Daman in the north, Kolanga in the west, Abdian and Behsud in the east and Dubila in the south.

¹⁸¹ See Figure 3 in the following section on village divisions.

¹⁸² In this section I will be referring to observations made during a field trip, and will therefore be using the past tense in reference to those observations, even in situations in which the phenomena described is still the case.

¹⁸³ The land price in Nangarhar, including in the Behsud area rose to \$100,000 for 2000 square meters. Interviews with local residents in QJK #69; #71 (2012) and #139 dated 15.02.2013.

especially if one travels by rickshaw or *zarang*.¹⁸⁴ There are several stops for the *zarang* service which passes through all parts of the village from south to north, with a main stop in the central QJK market.¹⁸⁵ In the northern part of the village a new market has been built with a two story building that, at the time of my visit, did not appear to be functioning as a market centre. The small private clinic in the QJK centre received patients on a daily basis but did not have a full-time service. There are five mosques in the village, two of them at the centre, including the grand mosque¹⁸⁶ which is led by the imam who is also the headmaster of the boys' school. There are two *madrasas*, one run by a villager who is a returnee from Pakistan (he and his wife teach religious studies to girls and boys separately)¹⁸⁷ and the second led by a man seen as 'very conservative' by local residents, as at one point he discouraged teenage girls from going to school (although after the matter was raised with village elders he stopped).

The village has a new building for the high school that was constructed with the Provincial Reconstruction Team's financial support. The building serves a dual function, operating as Queen Suraya Lycée for girls in the mornings and Qalal-e-Janan Khan Lycée for boys in the afternoons. The school land was contributed by local elites¹⁸⁸ and the building was constructed with funding from the US PRTs with a 10% village contribution.¹⁸⁹ The choice of name – especially for the girls' high school – should be noted here.¹⁹⁰ The fact that members of the village chose this name demonstrates two key points: 1) the village elites in this locality are open-minded and moderate enough to allow women to choose Queen Suraya as their role model; 2) given that in the larger Nangarhar context Ishaqzais consider themselves descendants of the southern elites or the *khans* (originating from Kandahar) their choice of a royal personality could also be related to this fact.

¹⁸⁴ Zarangs are three-wheeled motorbikes with a small cabin (similar to a tuk-tuk or auto-rickshaw) which are mainly used for public transportation in the area, especially by women.

¹⁸⁵ The market is owned by one of the key central QJK elders from the Ishaqzai tribe who apparently is not an active member of CDC, but whose economic status gives him a strong voice in the village overall governance.

¹⁸⁶ The Grand Mosque is where Friday Prayers and Eid Prayers are convened.

¹⁸⁷ It is common for children to attend a *madrasa* as well as the school according to village residents.

¹⁸⁸ According to local informants the total size of the school land is 22 *jeribs*, and was collectively owned by the fathers of Commander Mustafa, Haji Ghulam Farooq and Mawlawi Sami. In short, three of the main village elites contributed to the school.

¹⁸⁹ According to the US Department of Defence website the school costs were estimated at US \$116,000. (<http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=52689> accessed on 18.06.2014) The female deputy chief of CDC had a leading role in organising the construction of the school, particularly the collection of 10% community contribution. Interview with Female deputy chief #43 dated 28.11.2011.

¹⁹⁰ Queen Suraya was the wife of King Amanullah Khan (1919-1929) who was a reformist and his wife is known among Afghans as a pioneer for women's rights and a dedicated supporter of the King in his social reform projects.

There were 304 households in the village in 2004, but as a result of new arrivals over recent years, it has grown to approximately 487 households.¹⁹¹ The majority of the residents are Pashtuns from the Ishaqzai and Alizai tribes who left southern Kandahar and settled here; they mostly speak Dari.

Village governance relations



Figure 3: The tomb of Janan Khan in the village's graveyard.
The gravestone has a brief biography of Janan Khan ©photo by author

According to its residents, the history of this village goes back to the 18th century. Janan Khan was the grandson of Sepah-Salaar (Generalissimo) known as Medad Khan, a warrior general of Timor Shah's army who received the title of *Sardar-e-Sardaran* (Commander in Chief) from him.¹⁹² Since then, the family had lived in this village and all the Ishaqzai tribe in QJK consider themselves descendants of Janan Khan. Ishaqzais and Alizais reportedly make up around 80% of the village population; the other 20% includes Solizais, Afghan Arabs, Jabarkheyls and Taghars.¹⁹³ The village's close proximity to the city also attracts new settlers. However these new settlers are not entirely integrated and are yet to become part of the village community.

¹⁹¹ Email communication with NSP Office at MRRD, Kabul dated 28.12.2013; interview with the QJK *malik*/CDC *qaryadar* #41 dated 27.11.2011; interview with CDC Secretary #49 dated 31.11.2011; interview with QJK resident #50 dated 20.12.2011.

¹⁹² Timor Shah (1748-1793), second son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, both rulers of Afghanistan. See (Ferrier 1858) on Timor Shah's rule. Village history based on interview with village residents #41; #45; #52; #54 between 20-27.11.2011.

¹⁹³ Interview with village residents #45; #52; #54 dated 20-23.11.2011.

QJK has always had a *malik* (village representative) who took care of the village affairs and played a bridging role between the village and district headquarters.¹⁹⁴ The village *malik* is selected by the most influential men of high economic (ownership of land and property) and political (linkages with the major power brokers and/or ruling government at provincial and in Kabul) status. Tribal or kinship identity also plays a role in the status of influential men, but is secondary to economic and political status. For instance, the *maliks* in QJK have always been from the Ishaqzai tribe because they constitute the majority of the village population. According to elders, the QJK *malik* in earlier days used to represent neighbouring villages as well, but as the population increased and villages separated, the *malik* now represents only the QJK area.¹⁹⁵

The central QJK residents are more 'educated', i.e. they are literate. Women from central QJK are also mostly educated.¹⁹⁶ Most educated women work as civil servants, often as teachers or at child-care centres in Jalalabad. The first round of the girls' high school graduates attended Nangarhar University and the Teacher Training Institute in 2009. Men are involved in different private and public services. Women in other parts of QJK are mainly at home; some stated they did a few years of education, but the majority are illiterate or studied briefly and stopped working after school or, especially, after getting married.

Village elites in the case of QJK include different members of the Ishaqzai tribe. Among them are: Dr Alam Ishaqzai, who served in different capacities with government and is currently head of the provincial directorate of the Ministry of Finances (with previous PDPA loyalties); Haji Ghulam Farooq, a landlord who also owns the village central market; *Malik* T., who served as *malik* or village representative for most of the past two decades; *Mawlawi* Sami, a religious scholar with political affiliations with *Hezb-e-Islami Khalis*; Commander M., son of an old *malik* and a war time commander with *Hezb-e-Islami Khalis*; and Mrs. J. Jabarkeyl, who is also a member of the Ishaqzai tribe married to an 'outsider', but lives in QJK and plays an important role in village governance affairs.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ According to the *malik* who was in charge during the time of my field research, he is not paid and his position is only voluntary, but he confirms that many *maliks* are paid, either in cash or crops by the villagers. Interview with QJK *malik* #41 27.11.2011.

¹⁹⁵ According to villagers, the *malik* system has never gone out of use and it functioned in one or another form throughout the decades of war. Interview with nephew of the commander #138 dated 05.02.2013; Interview with QJK elder #52 dated 22.11.2012; Interview with QJK elder #74 dated 16.03.2012

¹⁹⁶ Based on interviews in the field and observation notes from August 2011-April 2012.

¹⁹⁷ In the following sections, I will elaborate further on this point about a woman being considered as a village elite and her limitations.

In addition to the customary village elders' *shura*, there are also other *shuras* in QJK.¹⁹⁸ Although, according to the village *malik*, the village *mullah* does not have formal membership of the village shura, he plays an *ad hoc* role rather than a formal one.¹⁹⁹ The imam of the QJK grand mosque explained the village shura mechanism as follows:

As *khateeb* (prayer leader) I do not have membership of any of the village shuras. But after Friday prayers, I always make an announcement if there is something happening in the village or if there is any issue, and then, the issue is raised and villagers discuss it in the presence of village elders and myself. Sometime the shura/council gatherings happen after Friday prayers. At other times, smaller meetings happen in a member's *hujra* [a separate guest compound/house]. Major events such as elections, *jirgahs* [large gatherings] and so forth always happen in the mosque. Decisions about village matters happen in these meetings. And I am often asked for advice.²⁰⁰

In the passage by the QJK imam, it is understood that the notion of *shura* does not necessarily mean a formal structure or institution, and in practice there are overlapping institutions, linked together by the same network of village elites. Where customary, formal (if we assume the CDCs as formal), and religious boundaries overlap with one another, a collective of village elites gathers to discuss their issues and make decisions. This blurriness among different village structures informs us that the distinction between different structures²⁰¹ becomes fuzzy in two respects: first, there are differences between the three in their nature, a *shura* is a gathering that can happen in a given space (be it a mosque, guesthouse or in the field.)²⁰² Secondly, once appointed by the village elites, *mullahs* and *maliks* are considered part of the village elites, operating as gatekeepers in different ways, and they too have a voice in the village decisions. The *mullah's* role is mainly ideological and involves approaching different village matters on the basis of religious teachings. Villagers approach different village elites for different kinds of problems. For instance, in the QJK case, it was observed that there was no clear line of distinction between the *mullah*, *malik* or *khan*.

¹⁹⁸ Different government and NGOs operating in the village have formed their own councils dealing with thematic matters such as school council, health council, etc.

¹⁹⁹ According to the village *malik*, the *mullah* is not formally a member of any shura, although occasionally he invites him to CDC meetings: "In CDC meetings I sometime bring the *mullah* and we listen to what he says. Although formally he is not a member." Interview with QJK *malik* #41 dated 27.11.2011.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Mullah of the Grand Mosque of QJK #42 dated 27.11.2011.

²⁰¹ See, for example, Brick (2008) who discusses the idea that village customary institutions are separate entities.

²⁰² Some of the CDC meetings in this village, for instance, happened in the older female CDC member's house.

Mullahs for instance, declared the celebration of the New Year (*Nawroz*) un-Islamic and ‘convinced’ all the men present at the Friday prayers that no public celebrations in the village should be held. One of the village elites, upon returning from the mosque, asked his family not to have any public celebrations and, although the women in his family did not agree, they were obliged to follow the *mullah’s* orders agreed by the village elders and men in the mosque.²⁰³ This example shows the collective power of village elites that in instances involves the *mullah*, *malik* and various other key village elites.

In sum, the Qala-e-Janan Khan village case demonstrates the different aspects of power dynamics in the village and different historical events that shaped how village governance relations are linked to the broader political and economic structures at the district and provincial levels.

6.3.2. Introducing the NSP and its implementation process

In this section, I will look at how the NSP was introduced in the village. My main argument is that from the beginning, the facilitating partners (FPs) staff simply relied on existing power structures to explain the programme. Mansuri and Rao (2004:24) review different reasons why facilitating partners in such programmes find it easier to rely on existing power structures (Mansuri and Rao 2004:24). These include the need to show results (Jackson 1997 cited in Mansuri and Rao 2004:24); when their (FP staff’s) own interests are in conflict with those of village actors (Vasan 2002 cited in Mansuri and Rao:24) or as younger or less experienced practitioners, they are faced with older and more experienced village gatekeepers who manipulate them for own their interests (Botchway 2001; Michener 1998 cited in Mansuri and Rao 2004:24) Here, different accounts from village elites and residents confirm this reliance on existing power structures.

QJK was one of the very first sites for CDD intervention in Nangarhar.²⁰⁴ The facilitating partner piloted the NSP in villages that were in close proximity to city centres, or places with which the FP was familiar. UN-Habitat used to have community councils in QJK prior to the launch of the NSP,²⁰⁵ hence, the QJK CDC was granted a total of US

²⁰³ Based on observation notes from QJK #65 dated 13-19.03.2012.

²⁰⁴ Behsud was one of the first districts where the NSP was piloted after its launch in 2003. Interview with ex-head of NSP OC in Jalalabad #70 dated 14.03.2012.

²⁰⁵ The NSP’s FP role was transferred from UN-Habitat to BRAC during the early stages. Interview with ex-head of NSP OC in Jalalabad #70 dated 14.03.2012; Email communication with NSP office at MRRD, Kabul dated 28.12.2013; Interview with QJK *malik/qardyadar* and CDC chief part II #46 dated 01.12.2011.

\$122,000 which was dispersed in two rounds of block-grants in the two NSP phases.²⁰⁶ Funded projects included supplying solar power (2007-9), vocational training for women (2007-8), a shallow well (2009), and a tertiary road (2013-14) in the village.²⁰⁷

The field staff or Social Mobilisers (SMs) from the FP²⁰⁸ presented the NSP programme to some village elders during the very first phase. The accounts below by the village *malik* and female deputy chief of CDC illustrate some important points about how it was introduced to villagers:

The NSP surveyors came to our village and asked me if they could list all village names/families and I said yes. After that, based on the list of people they had, the election for CDC was conducted. Then the CDC was established and started its work. We were informed that the CDC role was to identify the village needs at first stage and then to prioritise them. As we had a mixed *shura*, women and men were both part of all processes. So we listed electricity, roads and a school as our first priorities.²⁰⁹

And:

Our village became part of the NSP programme as one of the first villages in the country. They were piloting a mixed CDC where men and women could sit in the same meeting, so they came to our village. I did not know about it at all. I was at the school when Malik Sahib sent someone to me saying they want me to come and attend the election. I came and all of the people said they were ready to elect me. I was forced to be elected! [She said this with a smile] In the second round, I wasn't ready at all, then all insisted and so I agreed to be a candidate again. I did not want to, because I wanted other women from our village to come forward. [...] I don't want to become 'the key person' of the village. But if elders say something, I can't refuse it. They told me to put myself for election and I obeyed.²¹⁰

The above narratives by the village *malik* and the female deputy chief confirm that the FP staff mainly relied on the village elites, particularly the *malik*, as their key entry point. The quote from the female CDC member shows that FPs did not contact women

²⁰⁶ The total amount in Afs. is two rounds of 3,000,000. I converted this to USD using an estimated exchange rate of the time of US \$1:49 Afs.

²⁰⁷ Email communication with NSP office at MRRD, Kabul dated 28.12.2013

²⁰⁸ It is not verifiable if it was UN-Habitat or BRAC. But presumably it was UN-Habitat who introduced the NSP to the villagers, given that they had prior presence in the province and were the first FPs who implemented the NSP in Nangarhar.

²⁰⁹ Interview with QJK *malik/qardyadar* & CDC chief part II #46 dated 01.12.2011

²¹⁰ Interview with deputy chief of QJK (female) #43 dated 28.11.2011.

directly at the initial stage: rather, the village women were introduced through the *malik*. The *malik*, in the introductory phase, also informed the village elders about the programme and hence some time prior to elections it was decided that J. had to stand for the deputy chief of QJK CDC. Another informant from the village stated that Mustufi, the ex-deputy governor (a key village elite) had informed people about the NSP:

Mustufi is from our village. He told people that the MRRD is helping people. Then, people in the village formed the *shura* [CDC] so we get the help.²¹¹

The quotes above also show that there was a consensus among village elites on the work of the NSP. Hence, the *malik's* decision to allow the FPs to operate in the village was supported by village elites. He also played a gatekeeping role in 'facilitating' the work of FP staff at the village level.

It should be noted that prior to the NSP operating in this village, UN-Habitat used to have similar *shuras* where, for instance, women would informally gather and identify their problems and needs, but according to female CDC members these were more informal and casual than the CDC that was established later.²¹² The difference between earlier projects and the NSP is that the NSP was the first programme that had the village itself as a focus for establishing a more formal governing institution or council (ibid.).

Another point to be elaborated here is the reason that the FP staff did not reach out to women directly. The lack of consultation/introduction of the NSP to women, and also people in other parts of QJK, was not due to conservative perceptions within the community, but rather a form of control of access and information by the *malik* who acted as the gatekeeper.²¹³ He selected the would-be council members from each part of the village and their constituencies were mobilised within the village to vote for them as CDC members. Hence, to sum up, the way the NSP was introduced in the village relied entirely on the existing power structures and actors. This is why, as I will elaborate in the following sections, it is not surprising that the chief CDC position is occupied by the same person who also is the *malik* and, indeed, the *qaryadar*.

²¹¹ Interview with a village resident from Qala-e-Mandes #53 dated 22.12.2011

²¹² Interview with second female member of CDC #47 dated 03.11.2011.

²¹³ There is a limitation in this regard that I would like to address. Unfortunately, I was unable to interview the male and female SMs who worked in QJK and this makes it challenging to either comment or make claims about their working capacity and also the logic of why they decided to visit the *malik* rather than gathering an inclusive group from the community, including men and women as the NSP guidelines suggest.

6.3.3. Local governance through CDCs

Following the introduction of the NSP to villagers, according to the NSP mandate, Community Development Councils were to be established in the village. The Social Mobilisers (SMs) were mainly in charge of facilitating the overall process of formation by following pre-defined steps set out in the NSP manual.²¹⁴ These steps included counting the number of households in the village, gathering villagers and informing them about election proceedings and ensuring that women also took part in the elections and become members of the CDC. In QJK, according to many informants, people in general were not aware of the NSP and the reason for the survey.²¹⁵ The only time that people were informed in a general way about the formation of CDC was on election day when every man was asked to come to the grand mosque and women to the *malik*'s home to vote.²¹⁶ "We were not aware when the MRRD people came and introduced the NSP. We only knew when all was prepared. So people from our community only were informed on the election day."²¹⁷

This demonstrates the role of the *malik* as a strong gatekeeper who (presumably backed by village elites), decided to stand for election himself and carefully chose both who he informed of the election in advance and his running mates.²¹⁸ So, crucial information was controlled by the *malik* in a way that some influential persons who might potentially receive more votes than him, were not even aware that an election was to be held. The only people informed prior to the election were those chosen by the *malik* from the sub-divisions of QJK. Also the role of the SMs and their reliance on the *malik* is important to note: we can see here that the notion of development actors going to communities and remaining 'independent' or impartial is a myth, as by relying on the existing village leadership, in practice they align themselves under an operative framework which directs them towards a certain perspective or interest (Mosse et al. 1998).

²¹⁴ For more details on the programme phases and steps, please refer to **chapter five**, section 2.

²¹⁵ Interview with second female member of CDC #47 dated 03.11.2011; interview with Shoraghonday (one of the six village sub-divisions) CDC member #54 dated 23.12.2011; interview with two male elders #55 & #57 dated 23.12.2011.

²¹⁶ Interview with second female member of CDC #47 dated 03.11.2011; Interview with Shoraghonday CDC member #54 dated 23.12.2011; Interview with two male elders #55 & #57 dated 23.12.2011.

²¹⁷ Interview with Shoraghondy resident #54 dated 23.12.2011.

²¹⁸ Interview with CDC member #50 dated 23.12.2011.

Village politics interplay on CDC elections

It proved difficult to reconstruct the two CDC election processes based on local informants' accounts, but I try here to follow how things changed between the first and second elections.

The results of the first election (2004-5) indicate the representation in the QJK CDC. As Table 4 below illustrates, there was a good level of representation from different parts and different kinships in the village.

Table 4 Qala-e-Janan Khan village divisions and representation in the CDC

QJK village divisions	CDC Representation
Central Qala-e-Janan Khan (central)	<i>Malik</i> (chief); J.(F) (deputy chief); H.(F) (member resigned); A. (Secretary). They all are Ishaqzai with exception of A. who is related to Ishaqzai on the maternal side.
Bara Banda (West)	M.D. (Treasurer) from the Solizai tribe. Other members included a farmer from the village who worked the <i>malik's</i> land and Z.J. another villager.
Koza Banda (South West)	M.B., a respected teacher from the Alizai tribe is a member of the CDC, but he is not in the leadership or in any other leadership structure in the village..
Abdul Wahab Banda (North)	A. is a CDC member from this part, near the Daman area. He is not Ishaqzai.
Qala-e-Mandes (South)	Col. N. is Ishaqzai and he represented this part of village. It is the smallest sub-division with only four households.
Shuraghonday (East)	A. is Ishaqzai and is CDC member for this area that has 25-28 houses. This is the community where the Commander (grandson of Old Malik) lives.

As the table illustrates, the key positions were all taken by residents of Central QJK who worked together to elect the CDC leadership from amongst themselves. This confirms the earlier point that central village elites managed to control the process and turn it to their own advantage, therefore, it was not surprising to see the *malik* elected as CDC chief. In most cases, the CDC members stated that the *malik* had told them to stand for election, so it was obvious they would vote for the *malik* as chief.²¹⁹ However, it has to be noted that the consensus was not the result of a joint gathering of all villagers, neither was it a consent by representatives of each household/tribe or geographical boundaries; primarily it was the *malik's* choice of who should represent each locality within the village. One tactic the *malik* used was to choose a less powerful representative for each cluster, for instance, to have CDC member A. as a young man (then) in his 20s (the nephew of Commander M.) from Shoraghonday, he was a

²¹⁹ Interview(s) with QJK Village CDC members #43; #44; #47; #50; #53 and #60 dated between November-December, 2011.

strategic choice preferable to the commander (grandson of the old *malik*) who might potentially successfully compete for the CDC leadership. Consequently, the election of the *malik* as the head of CDC was smooth and uncontested in the first election.

In the second election held in 2009, the situation changed.²²⁰ Conflict emerged when a resident of Shoraghondy, *Qomandan* M. an ex-Mujahiddin commander and the grandson of the old *malik* Sarwar Khan – decided to stand for election as CDC chief as a rival to Malik T.:²²¹

In the second election, people were not happy with the *malik* as the chief of CDC and the current CDC members. We wanted to have some new members, but this caused some conflicts in our village. (...) We wanted new people, because most of the current CDC members were weak and unable to help their constituencies and the leadership were a few smart people who only worked for their own benefit. People from the rest of the village were not happy with them. Commander M. is highly respected by people, he serves people well, so we wanted to add him in the *shura*. The problem emerged when Commander M. wanted to become a member of our cluster [Shoraghondy] and then run for the CDC chief position. But supporters of the *malik* [central QJK] refused this and we had arguments that could lead to a fight.²²²

The person who gave this account was a member of the CDC, and he and the commander were also members of the Ishaqzai tribe. This account informs us how the CDC leadership, as a source of public authority with the power to distribute resources, becomes a battlefield for other elites or patrons. This attempt by the commander to push his way into the CDC was resisted by other village elites. As a result, the QJK residents and the village elites (mainly the central QJK members) decided to recognise the previous CDC members and leadership as legitimate and the FPs followed their agreement.²²³ Another important aspect of this effort by the commander is to look at it more generally (beyond the village) as a trend where war time commanders tried to take control of power and authority.²²⁴

²²⁰ Over completion of one full NSP phase, there needs to be elections to refresh the CDC legitimacy. See **chapter five**, section 5.2.2 for more details on the NSP phases.

²²¹ Interview with Shoraghondy resident #54 dated 23.12.2011; Interview with Abdulwahab Banda resident #60 dated 23.12.2011.

²²² Interview with Shoraghondy resident #54 dated 23.12.2011.

²²³ In 2014, I was informed that the QJK village elders replaced the village *malik* with a new person (not the Commander).

²²⁴ Interview with male aid worker in Jalalabad #120 dated 03.06.2012.

Negotiating distribution of resources

Events both inside and outside the village led to a very different dynamic in the second CDC election in QJK in 2009.²²⁵ One of the central issues that resulted in tensions was the prioritisation and implementation of projects at the village level. According to the chief of the CDC, the *malik*, there were three main priorities: 1) electricity (solar power); 2) gravelling the roads; and 3) building a school.²²⁶ All fifteen members of the CDC agreed on these priorities and they developed plans to turn them into projects.

One of these projects was the distribution of solar power panels. The CDC decided that they would collect Afs.3000 (approx. US\$65) for every three households as a community contribution to the price of each solar panel.²²⁷ The solar panel distribution turned out to be a complicated and conflictual experience. There were accusations of corruption against the CDC leadership and its chief from all parts of the village, those who received panels and those who did not: "There were issues with the solar panel size, some were big and some were small, people said there was corruption involved."²²⁸ An elderly villager added: "*Hambastagi Milli* [the NSP] has provided people with solar panels, but only those who have a close friendship with the *malik*."²²⁹

The second female member of the CDC, the *malik*'s sister and a resident of central QJK, added to the complaints: "I was very upset being a member of CDC and yet because I was busy at home with maternity leave, they dropped me completely off the list and I did not receive a solar panel".²³⁰

Although it is difficult to verify whether there was any corruption involved in the process of solar panel distribution, what is obvious is that some of the confusion created among people contributed to the idea that something unlawful was going on. It is common that with resources comes corruption, as well as allegations of corruption, suspicion and lack of trust among the population. This is especially true if there is not enough clarity in the system and transparency at the different levels that the programme operates on. For example, one of the staff members of the provincial office of the MRRD said:

²²⁵ The specific dates of both elections were not available; based on local informants' account and NSP data I approximate that the first election happened during 2004-5 and the second during 2008-9.

²²⁶ The school building was not directly part of the NSP block-grants according to the NSP record. The funding for this was paid by the Nangarhar PRT. Interview with *malik*/CDC chief/*qaryadar* part II #46 dated 01.12.2011.

²²⁷ Interviews with residents from different parts of QJK #47; #52; #53 and #66 dated between 20-24.11.2011.

²²⁸ Interview with resident of AbdulWahab Banda #66 dated 24.11.2011.

²²⁹ Interview with QJK elder man #57 dated 22.11.2011.

²³⁰ #47 dated 03.12.2011.

I give you an example. There is a project on which, for instance, Afs20,000 is spent. The CDC leadership would report to the RRD staff [provincial MRRD] that we will write a receipt for Afs60,000 and if you help us, we will share a percentage of this extra with you and so they agree and approve the overpriced receipt and the extra Afs40,000 will be divided among them.²³¹

It is important to point out here that the conflict over distribution of resources was not between different tribes or different parts of the village, but more between those in the CDC's key positions and those villagers who did not benefit from it. In one case the issue has become an instrument used by a rival of *Malik* T. to re-consider their status as a separate village:

In this village [he refers to his own community, Shoraghondy] no one gave us solar panels. We are 30 families, not even one family received one. Because the current *malik* does not help us we are planning to register our community as a separate village. In the past we were fewer families, now there are more families in this community.²³²

In the case of Shoraghondy, however, it should be mentioned that while some residents complained about not receiving any solar panels, another claimed that their own cluster representative had asked for them to be provided with a water reservoir instead of solar panels. As the water reservoir did not materialize due to errors in estimation and costs, the villagers from Shoraghondy found themselves losers on both accounts.²³³ This idea of separating their community from QJK emerged due to these problems and in particular after the conflict over the second CDC election.

Despite the challenges it faced, the CDC and its leadership continued to operate as an active hub, attracting NGOs and, at least in one case, the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) from Nangarhar to provide assistance to the village. The CDC members took part in resolving some disputes and issues during their biweekly meetings.²³⁴ But the main interest for the CDC and its leadership remained the projects funded through the NSP and other sources for the village.

In sum, the overall process of the CDC formation and the way it has operated, informs us how programmatic interventions result in a complex form of governance relations in

²³¹ Conversation with Nangarhar RRD staff who requested anonymity #68 dated 15.03.2012

²³² Interview with resident of Shoraghondy, QJK #54 dated 20.11.2011.

²³³ Interviews with different residents of Shoraghondy area of QJK #51; #54; #56 and #57 dated 20-23.11.2011.

²³⁴ Interview with different CDC members from QJK #43; #44; #50; #60 dated 11.2011 to 12.2011.

a given context. The co-option of CDCs by the local elites did not come as a surprise, as it represents the power of the existing structures and how they influence and control processes. The conditions that made this possible were several: the local elites operated under a strong patronage system of rule where each cluster was represented by one patron who depended on the *malik* who, in turn, was backed by the village elites who play a leading role in the way governance relations are led in the village.

6.3.4. Women's role in local governance and donor conditionality

Women's inclusion has been a firm conditionality for the NSP intervention in Afghanistan. When the NSP facilitators visited QJK, they informed the village *malik* (*Malik T.*) that if women were not included in the CDCs, the programme would not be implemented. However, on the QJK side, given its reputation as a non-conservative village, this was not a big concern for the villagers or for the facilitators. The majority of male and female respondents in this study expressed their sympathy and support for the inclusion of women in the CDC to varying degrees.²³⁵ In this part, I will expand on how women took part in the CDC and overall village governance by first looking at how different village actors responded to this question, and then briefly explore the background of the two women (J. and H.) who were represented in the CDCs. I will conclude by looking at the broader picture of how this conditionality opened space for local women leaders to emerge as village elites or gatekeepers, although with some limitations.

Women in QJK, especially from the Ishaqzai kinship have a reputation for being educated and involved in public work. They used to work outside the house, but often 'outside' meant in Jalalabad and not within the village itself. This meant that they were not active in the village meetings or *jirgahs*.²³⁶

Different village informants, varying from youth to elderly, from elite to people with lower economic or social status such as farmers or newly settled residents, and also the religious actors expressed their full support for women being part of the CDC leadership. Yet, it is worth mentioning here that these responses came as an 'opening' question or discussion about women's public role. With the majority of informants, as soon as the discussion moved on to further details at an in-depth level, things evolved

²³⁵ It is important to note here that around 20% of interviews in QJK were conducted in my absence by a male research assistant but there were no differences in informants' responses in answering this question whether asked by me, as a woman and the two male researchers I sent to the village.

²³⁶ Interview with QJK resident also CDC member #50 dated 20.12.2011.

in a different manner. For instance, a farmer, head of one of the six clusters expressed his view:

J. [Deputy Chief of CDC] is a respected woman, she attends our CDC meetings. It is good to have her there; she is well-educated and knows the needs of women. For us, she is like a family member (...) In our cluster there is no woman. Our women are not involved in the CDC and were not involved in the election either. I know there is a women's group in the village, but we [the farmer's cluster] do not have any working relationship thus far with women.²³⁷

The cluster that the farmer represents is made up mainly of working/farming families with the lowest economic status in the village. The idea of having a female representative from among these families was out of the question according to the farmer. Hence, one important factor that could be observed in this example is that the economic and social status of women affected their ability to participate in the CDC, even to vote, let alone their inclusion as CDC members or leaders. And for this reason, it was not surprising to see these two particular women (J. and H.) were elected as CDC members because of their socio-political status, not because of being women, per se. (see below for more details) However, such inclusion should not be seen as full participation by women in all aspects of village governance. Women's role in the CDC remains restricted to matters related to development projects in the village and bringing resources into the village. For instance, J. the deputy chief of CDC, and member of the District Development Assembly (DDA), managed to bring in donors and resources through the different networks she connected with.²³⁸ However, neither J. nor H. (the second female CDC member) were or have been part of the larger informal village mechanism for governance that included dispute and conflict resolution or other broader issues that were discussed outside the CDC meetings. Those matters still remain 'men's affairs', discussed most often in the grand mosque after Friday prayers, a place to which the women have no access.

Here, I will further elaborate on what qualified these two women as candidates for a first time formal role in the village's public affairs.

J. is in her mid-50s, a mother of three, and married to a man from Kabul. QJK is her native village and she lives in a house inherited from her family. J. is trained and has worked as a teacher for over two decades. After her marriage she lived in Kabul, but in the early 1990s she moved back to QJK because of the civil war. Under the Taliban

²³⁷ Interview with village farmer #44 dated 29/11/2011

²³⁸ See the following section 6.4.2 for further details.

regime, she was involved in vaccination programmes in Jalalabad and also led home-based schools for girls in QJK. J. was approached by *Malik T.* to stand as a CDC member and she won the majority vote in the election, becoming the deputy chief of the CDC, the position reserved for women.

H. was in her 30s when she was elected as the second woman in the CDC leadership. Like J., H. is married to a man from outside her village and kin. She studied in Jalalabad and works at the QJK high school. H. joined J. in most of her village activities prior to the CDC formation. She taught girls in home-based schools during the Taliban. Together with J. she took part in different projects NGOs brought to the village prior to the CDC. H. is Malik T.'s sister and she lives in the large compound owned by their father, along with their other siblings and their families. Her selection as the second female CDC member was because of being the *malik's* sister and also because of her active role in the village. When she was elected, she did not have children. After she had children, she was not able to attend CDC meetings regularly and finally she resigned, supposedly having lost trust in the CDC's work and also because she was upset at not receiving a solar panel.²³⁹

The family background and socio-economic status of the two women in the QJK CDC, inform us about the village elite's strategies that led to the selection of women acceptable within the existing ideological system of patriarchy and socio-political norms. This mind-set is what determines the majority of men's and women's views on women's public role in Afghan society. Hence, the QJK residents, although relatively open-minded compared to others who would not agree to even a symbolic presence of women in the public eye, still chose only women within the elite networks who were not their wives, but rather their sisters who had married outside the village circle. I raised this question to Malik T.'s wife and her account confirmed the notion of the patriarchal mind-set in Afghanistan; the best way to describe a woman with a public role is compare her with men:

It [membership of CDC] is a man's job, so my husband is there. [smiling] J. [the female deputy chief of CDC] has characteristics like a man; she is very brave and she does not feel embarrassed to sit and speak with strangers. Also she is married to a Kabuli man and that's why it was okay with her husband that she sits with men

²³⁹ Interviews #43 28.11.2011; #47 dated 03.12.2011; and #78 dated 16.03.2012

at CDC meetings. I do not have the same courage as her. Also, men here would feel very embarrassed if their wives sat with other men in the same room.²⁴⁰

These two women did not have other competitors within the village in terms of mobilising voters or bringing resources into the village. J. in particular was an important figure in terms of bringing in different projects (i.e. resources) beneficial to different parts of the village.

From my observations in this context, despite the nominal agreement of the majority of male and female villagers, in reality they did not envision women's public role beyond the provision of services through women-only focused projects. Men in the village, such as the farmer and others, had a particular understanding of what type of women could participate in the village leadership. The reason given by the majority who agreed on women's role was solely seen as "It is good to have women in the group who know the problems of other women and can help them".²⁴¹ The dominance of this kind of mentality and the limitations experienced by an average woman in a male-dominant society have resulted in the maintenance of a form of status quo in regard to gender relations in the village. In other words, although the broader consensus among villagers about the role of female CDCs has given these two women a platform to enter into the sphere of village governance relations, practically, the dominant customary practices have limited their role in changing gender relations.

It was observed that age was an important factor in the case of J. who remained an active member of the CDC and village representation at the district level. As many scholars have already pointed out, it seems evident that younger women – especially if they are married with children – face more obstacles to take part in these processes (Kakar 1979:172-173; Kabeer et al. 2011; Mielke 2013:19) In addition to this, the role of FPs and their staff, particularly their female SMs cannot be ignored – the following chapter elaborates further on this. However, in QJK, because J. was an active and experienced woman herself, she succeeded in securing a women-focused project through the NSP. Additionally, she brought in many more resources through different NGOs and aid organisations to her village women and girls.

In sum, the most remarkable contribution of the NSP intervention and its conditionality on women's inclusion in the CDC leadership was to provide a level of legitimacy and formal recognition of women's role in village governance. The section highlighted that these particular women were chosen for the CDC by Malik T. and other elites because

²⁴⁰ Conversation with wife of the QJK *malik* part II #46 dated 01.12.2011

²⁴¹ Interview with male QJK villager from Qala-e-Mandes #56 dated 23.12.2011.

of their kinship relations (especially their out-marriage) and active role in the community prior to the NSP intervention. However, women's role remained basically limited to the developmental aspects of governance practices, more precisely in terms of bringing in financial and economic resources to the village. The customary practices of conflict resolution and land or other dispute resolutions that were often discussed after Friday prayers in the mosque were not as open to women, hence the spatial aspect of where discussions around governance occurred also affected women's governance practices in the village. The notion of seniority, above all, informs us that although some women in the QJK context have had access to resources and a level of agency, they still continue to operate within the patriarchal framework and it is still far from practical to begin challenging the gendered roles of women within these local settings. The women were seen as 'family members' rather than as active leaders. And finally, neither the NSP as a programme, nor the FPs had any form of strategy that would allow them to challenge the existing patriarchal forms of mind-set.

6.3.5. *Intended goals and unintended outcomes*

In previous chapters, I discussed the idea that programmatic interventions cannot be entirely judged as failures or successes because once they are implemented in a context, no matter how successful (or not) they are, they leave their mark on the existing power relations. In the MRRD interventions too, the actual goal that the programme was designed to attain may not have been achieved, but it certainly left its mark on the way governance relations operated in the subject context.

QJK, like many other parts of Nangarhar, had been part of various NGOs' service provision coverage for most of the 1990s and 2000s. Initially the NSP programme was equated with the NGO activity, but later people were able to distinguish between the NGO projects and the NSP as governmental assistance for people.²⁴² Their understanding of this intervention was mainly limited to its provision of services through the block-grant and projects.²⁴³ For instance, "reduce the gap between people and government" and "improving economic conditions by creating jobs and services" were reflections of villagers who were (and were not) involved in the CDCs directly.²⁴⁴ What is observed in these reflections is the fact that none of them discussed the CDC as a village governance institution.

²⁴² Interviews with local CDC member and non-member residents of QJK #47 #50 #60 #72 dated between November 2011-July 2012.

²⁴³ Interviews with local CDC member and non-member residents of QJK #47 #50 #60 #72 dated between November 2011-July 2012.

²⁴⁴ Interviews in QJK #50 #43 #57 dated between (2011-12)

Although the majority of people in the village felt that the CDC was a positive thing in terms of bringing in resources and providing some services for villagers, they also shared concerns about the spread of corruption associated with the distribution of these resources. When comparing the CDC with the *malik* system, some said: “A *shura* solves the problems, a *shura* is better than just one man being a leader [referring to Malik T.] but corruption created lots of problems.”²⁴⁵

Another informant reiterated this:

In my opinion, through CDC *shuras* we can solve lots of problems. We can avoid corruption because if one is involved, others can keep him accountable. In the old *malik* system, no one ever questioned the *malik*, because he was one man. For example if he wanted to, he could put all the Afs10,000 that someone donated to his village in his pocket. But in the *shura* this is impossible, because if he does, others will know; if he shares among others, it becomes a big embarrassment for him among his own villagers. I cannot say there is no corruption at all in [CDC] *shuras*, but I can say it's better than the *malik* system.”²⁴⁶

These elaborations confirm that lack of accountability from the village elites to the rest of population existed historically and did not change with the introduction of the CDC. The QJK experiences with the CDC informs us that locals, whether members of the CDC or not, realised that corruption was widespread and that CDC members were no different from other people who had access to power and resources within or beyond their communities.

The preference for collective over individual leadership was also highlighted in some of the discussions with QJK residents. The QJK villagers preferred a *shura* over an individual's leadership. This preference could be interpreted in two ways: 1) as the above quote reflected, the more people involved in the resource distribution (one of the key roles for the CDC) the less chance there was for corruption; and 2) because of the broader political context where, for instance during national elections, political elites mostly relied on buying votes and loyalties via the *maliks*, their (the *maliks*) reputation as corrupt individuals has become more widespread.

For instance, this anecdote from H. (a CDC member who resigned) about how the situation changed between the first and second elections demonstrates how broader

²⁴⁵ Interview with QJK shopkeeper #60 dated 23.12.2011.

²⁴⁶ Interview with CDC Treasurer in QJK #50 dated 11.12.2011.

political processes such as national level elections affected the way villagers were voting and choosing their representatives:

I say democracy was good, but the national elections have ruined it for us. Before [referring to pre-2004 years] it was not difficult for us to gather a group of people in one house and discuss our problems and issues, but now if you aim to do so, everyone expects you to pay something. We were regularly meeting with no expectation for return, but that culture no longer exists. To me, that culture of people in general and especially women discussing their problems, deciding what to do in a *shura* was a real democracy, but these elections ruined our democracy! I mean, when these larger presidential and parliamentary elections happened, the candidates started to bribe people and buy votes through paying for food, clothes, turbans and even cash to voters, so now every time you speak of *shura*, elections, or gathering people, they think they must be paid.²⁴⁷

This account is crucial in helping us understand how notions of liberal institution building operated under a strictly patrimonial system of governance, whether at the village level or beyond. The anecdote about democracy being ‘good’ but ‘ruined by elections’ is perhaps, the best way of summing up the implications of liberal institution building under a patrimonial system of rule.

²⁴⁷ Interview with second female CDC member #47 dated 03.12.2011.

6.4. District Governance Interventions

6.4.1. Behsud district: A site for contested interventions

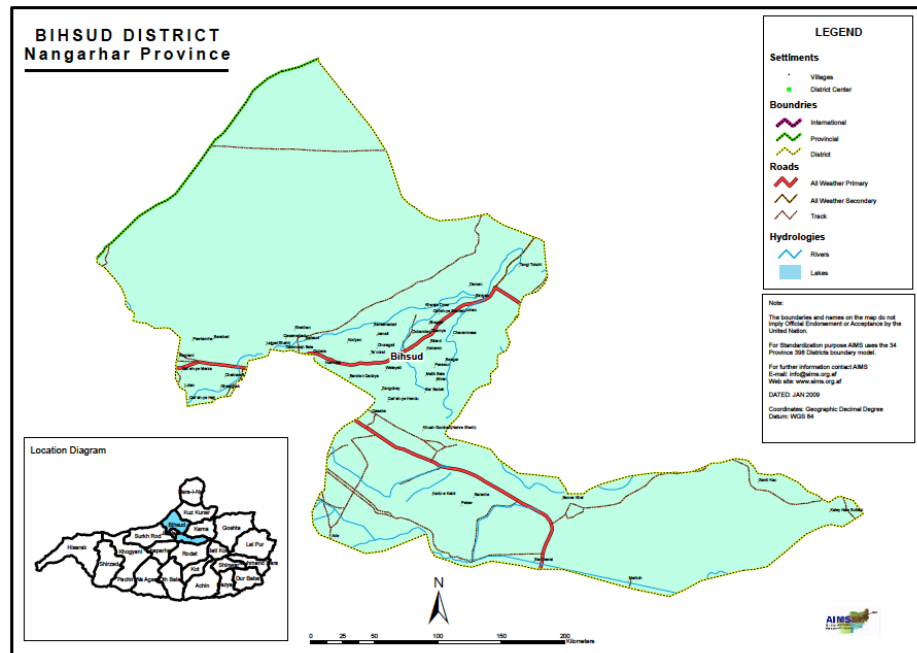


Figure 4: Behsud district map ©AIMS

Behsud²⁴⁸ is one of Nangarhar's 22 districts. It is located in the northern part of the province and surrounds the city of Jalalabad, Nangarhar's provincial capital, to the north, east and south.²⁴⁹ The new district headquarters, built by the USA PRTs at a cost of US \$450,000,²⁵⁰ is located in a relatively remote area in the south-west known as Qala-e-Regi, approximately 13-14 kilometres from Jalalabad and 15 kilometres from Qala-e-Janar Khan (the village selected for this research). Administratively, the district has a sub-directorate for most of the line ministries.²⁵¹ It is the third most populated district after Jalalabad and Surkhrood (CSO 2012a), with approximately 108,700 inhabitants.²⁵² According to MRRD documents, Behsud has 100 villages, all of them

²⁴⁸ Behsud became a district in its own right in 1992 during the Mujaddedi leadership period. Prior to that, it was considered an *alaqadari* or sub-district of Surkhrood which is located in the south-western part of today's Behsud. Interview with DG #79 dated 17.03.2012; Interview with QJK *malik* #41 dated 20.12.2011.

²⁴⁹ Behsud borders the Kuz Kunar (or Khewa) and Kama districts in the north, Rodat and Chaparhar in the south, Surkhrood in the west and Batikot in the east. It covers a total of 312 square kilometres.

²⁵⁰ According to a news report, the building was inaugurated on November 15th, 2011 <http://www.pajhwok.com/dr/photo/161802> (accessed on 08.04.2013)

²⁵¹ The district sub-directorates include representation of various line ministries and the judiciary. Interview with DG Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁵² The most recent numbers according to the Central Statistics Office (in 2012) estimates 108,700, while documents from the MRRD and IDLG have hugely different numbers for the population. 165,000 (MRRD, NABDP, 2010) and 250,000 (IDLG, Behsud district assessment).

covered by the NSP; the district governor, however, claims there are 128 villages.²⁵³ The ethnic composition of the district is diverse, including Pashtuns (55%), Afghan Arabs (40%) and Tajik (5%) (UNHCR 2002).



Figure 5: The new Behsud district building
©Pajwak Photo

According to the district governor of Behsud, the district boundary and jurisdictions of Jalalabad and Behsud are administratively complicated by the fact that Nangahar's customs office (*gumruk*) lies within Behsud's district boundary, as does Jalalabad Airport and a large international military base attached to it, in addition to the Gambiri Desert in which a large US military base is planned.²⁵⁴ The main Jalalabad-Torkham road also runs through Behsud. However, the remoteness of the district office tends to be confined to more local and less politically contentious issues. The international military forces, for instance, only contact the Behsud district administration if something is specifically related to a given case in villages under the district's jurisdiction. For major issues, they are in direct contact with the provincial authorities in Jalalabad.²⁵⁵ Nevertheless, it remains an important district because of its proximity to the provincial centre and the heavy military presence, which brings in resources to the area and also

²⁵³ According to the district governor, there are around 128 small and large villages but only 98 are officially registered with the district.

Interview with district governor of Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁵⁴ Interview with district governor of Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁵⁵ Interview with district governor of Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012.

attracts anti-government activities, issues of security and illicit activities such as smuggling, organised crime, etc (TLO 2010; CPAU 2010; Mansfield 2013).

Although influenced by the processes of urbanisation, Behsud is still a largely rural district. Most villages have some shops and marketplaces, but they are only regulated by the local owners and villagers as there is no formal revenue or taxation mechanism affecting local businesses.²⁵⁶ In general there are tax collection checkpoints, such as the one located on Behsud Bridge²⁵⁷ (see Figure 6).

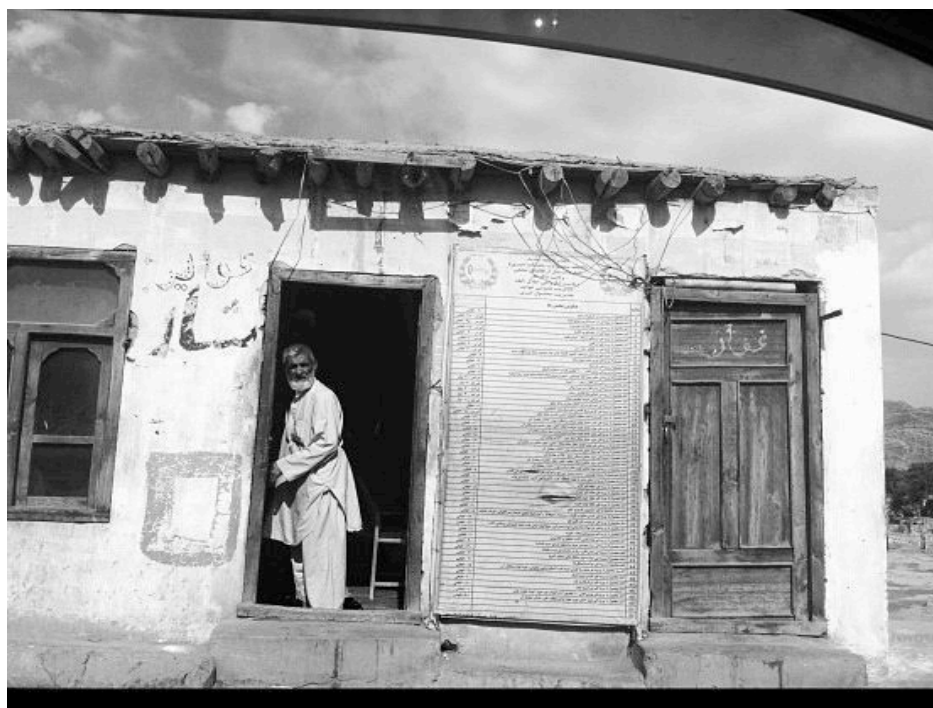


Figure 6: Tax collection check point on Behsud Bridge, Nangarhar
©Photo by author

The district government houses the district governor, security apparatus, sub-directorates from different line ministries and the district court. Although constitutionally required, formal district councils have yet to be established (2014). Instead, there are District Development Assemblies, created by the MRRD's National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) and from 2010 onwards, a council created as part of the Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) run by the PRT (through the IDLG).

²⁵⁶ Interview with district governor, Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012; Interview with QJK community elder #69 dated 13.03.2012.

²⁵⁷ It is unclear whether these checkpoints are formal or informal. The tax collection spot on Behsud Bridge is attached to the security checkpoint which may be an indicator that it is a formal method tax collection, but there is no evidence either way if the collected tax money is channelled into national, provincial or district budgets. (My observation); See also CPAU (2010:9).

Both councils used to work through the district headquarters.²⁵⁸ However, by the time this research was conducted, the ASOP council had been dissolved.²⁵⁹ NGOs operating in Behsud include BRAC which is the Facilitating Partner for the NSP.²⁶⁰ Most NGOs work on agriculture, education, health, income-generation, livelihoods, etc. Given the close proximity to the centre and relative security that the district has, it attracts different intervening institutions and actors to operate in the area. These, in addition to NGOs, include political groups, politico-military factions and religious networks (mostly conservative groups). At the time of the fieldwork, several new grand mosques and *madrasas* were being built in different parts of the district. Respondents explained they were sponsored by Pakistan or, in some cases, by local businessmen and influential persons.

Despite its relative security, Behsud experiences intermittent security threats due to the strong government and international military presence in its vicinity. During my visit to the district headquarters, I was strictly advised to go there in the morning and leave by mid-day, because after mid-day the area was no longer under government control according to local informants.²⁶¹ Behsud is illustrative of a wider pattern, in which increased international military presence (particularly due to the military surge 2009-2012) has also meant more anti-government and anti-foreign troop activities and more security issues in the area.

The politico-military networks of Jalalabad and Behsud overlap. Similar to Nangarhar as a whole, power structures within Behsud are complex and devisive, including HIG (Hikmatyar faction), HIK (Khalis faction) and ex-PDPA members, many of whom were now active within the current government.²⁶² The presence of political elites from

²⁵⁸ The following sub-section elaborates on the nature of these councils and how they have been operating.

²⁵⁹ Interview with District Governor Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁶⁰ According to the district governor, there are around 11 international and 8 national NGOs operating in Behsud. Interview with District Governor Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁶¹ District HQ is often used by the district residents to gain ID cards, or carry out other administrative related work. It seemed there was an agreement between the district governor and the local Taliban that allowed these operations to be carried out in the morning, while in the afternoon the area was considered unsafe for any official.

²⁶² For example, Eng. Abdul Ghafar, a Behsud native, was a senior commander of the *Hezb-e-Islami* - Hikmatyar faction in the eastern region. During the Mujahiddin regime he was head of customs; he is now the MP for Nangarhar. Dr. Mohammad Alam Ishaqzai received his PhD from the University of Petersburg in Russia, served as deputy governor for Gulagha Shirazay and then became governor of Baghlan; he is currently head of the Ministry of Finance provincial directorate, one of the key governing positions in Nangarhar. He is from Behsud's Qala-e-Janan Khan. A number of village level commanders or influential figures that I met during field research (2011-2012) are also from villages in Behsud, indicating that they were part of *Hezb-e-Islami* of Mawlawi Khalis. This implies that the majority of the district is populated by actors who are directly working with the current government. (TLO 2010:36).

northern Nangarhar (including from Behsud) in the current government may be interpreted as an indicator of relative stability for the area and, more broadly, the northern part of Nangarhar.²⁶³ Nevertheless, Behsud's security issues mainly come in two forms: 1) direct Taliban attacks against the international military forces and government forces and threatening of government officials; and 2) criminal activities such as kidnapping, targeted murders and robberies of houses that are mainly related to issues such as land-grabbing, drug smuggling, and personal disputes.²⁶⁴

The MRRD presence in the district is in the form of its district sub-directorate. According to NSP data, 121 CDCs have been established in Behsud. Out of these, 100 villages were included in the first two phases and 21 in the third. In total 96 CDCs have received their first and second round block-grants.²⁶⁵

The IDLG carry out their work through the office of the district governor. The US PRTs operated through the IDLG whose representatives were based at the district's office to implement its district support projects. One of the IDLG's key roles is to appoint the district governors from Kabul (Nijat 2014). The district governor for Behsud, who initially applied for the Batikot district, was appointed as district governor in Batikot through the IDLG's civil service reform programme. However, the governor of Nangarhar (Gul Agha Sherzai) moved him to Behsud after eight months.²⁶⁶ This highlights the level of power and authority that the provincial governor exercises over provincial and district matters under his rule. As Jackson (2014) pointed out, the appointment of district governors, depending on the significance of the district, is seen as a reward or punishment for those who ally with or oppose the provincial governor (Jackson 2014:27). The district governor at the time of the research was a young man in his mid-30s, a native of the district of Pacheerwagam and an economics graduate of Nangarhar University. More importantly, he did not have close links with the existing political elites, particularly the governor's rivals, so his appointment to an important district could be seen as an attempt by the governor to strengthen his own patronage network.

²⁶³ See section 6.2.3 in this chapter for more on this point.

²⁶⁴ These are sometimes more common than direct Taliban attacks. Although there are overlaps between these different types of insecurity it is still important to note the differences, particularly given that the district is hugely prone to land disputes and land-grabbing. Interview with Village Affairs Sub-Director #80 dated 17.03.2012. See also TLO (2010), CPAU (2010) and Mansfield (2013).

²⁶⁵ Email communication with NSP Office at MRRD, Kabul dated 28.12.2013

²⁶⁶ Interview with District Governor Behsud #79 dated 17.03.2012.

6.4.2. Competing forms of central government interventions

The IDLG's operations at the district level came after the MRRD's programmes were initiated and implemented. It was obvious that this gave the MRRD the upper hand on the ground. However, IDLG's interest in district and village governance was not solely about competition between two ministries.²⁶⁷ The dynamic was also shaped by the differing approaches of the donors (military or developmental) to governance. The IDLG was the major partner of the international military forces, who relied on the newly established institution implementing its district governance projects for purposes of 'stabilisation'.²⁶⁸ As discussed in **chapter five**, this move is related to the broader shift in intervention policies where initial bottom-up approaches were seen as 'time-consuming' and the intervening forces, especially the military, were more attracted to immediate results.²⁶⁹

The MRRD attempted to create district level institutions known as District Development Assemblies (DDAs) in 2007. The DDAs were formed out of CDCs (village level councils), specifically the CDC chief clusters.²⁷⁰ However, after the establishment of the IDLG and particularly after the military's shift from counter-terrorism to counterinsurgency (COIN), there was more emphasis on district governance through stabilisation programmes.²⁷¹ This international military focus, and indeed the IDLG's interest in maintaining more influence and control over district governance affairs, led to an attempt by the IDLG to form another district council despite the existence of the District Development Assemblies that operated similarly to district councils. Behsud provides an example of how one intervention was built over the other in the district.

The MRRD intervention

The DDA "enhances cooperation between the communities and government and ensures community participation in district development planning and management processes"(MRRD 2010). Although the DDA mandate does not explain its role as a 'governing' institution or describe it as operating as the District Council, the manner in which it was formed (through elections by village CDC representatives) and its role in

²⁶⁷ See **chapter five** for more systematic analysis of motivations for the MRRD and IDLG and their donors' interests in district governance.

²⁶⁸ DOD (2010), in its annual report, refers to the IDLG as the lead and key partner in carrying out different DoD projects such as the District Delivery Programme, Social Outreach Programme and various others.

²⁶⁹ See **chapter five** section 3.1 for more on this point.

²⁷⁰ **Chapter five**, section 5.2.2 provides further details on the overall process of DDA formation and its broader programme.

²⁷¹ According to the Nangarhar PRT, the DDP support includes "greater pay for district officials, funding for operation and maintenance of current facilities and approval of new facilities." (<http://prtnangarhar.blogspot.no/> (accessed on 24.04.2013)).

the allocation and distribution of resources gave DDA members an important governing role at the district level.²⁷² The representatives from the Behsud CDCs who were organised in 16 clusters, elected 30 persons, including 10 women, to form the District Development Assembly.²⁷³ DDA membership is on a voluntary basis and members are not paid. They gather relatively regularly, their key role according to the DDA's chief to channel development assistance in an equitable way to all Behsud villages; help with dispute and conflict resolution and also take care of security matters that concern the district. The DDA chief is a man with a HIG background who had also been a *malik* and CDC chief in his village in Behsud:

I have been *malik* of my village for a long time. When the election for the CDC was conducted in my village, I was away for Haj [pilgrimage to Mecca]. People elected me in my absence. Then, when the DDA was formed, I stood for the DDA chief position. In the first round, I had only three votes against me. My rival was not respected by people and elections happened in the presence of World Bank and government representatives. And in the second round I had 29 votes, meaning the absolute majority of the DDA members [30 of them] voted for me and I remain in my position.”²⁷⁴

The words of the DDA chief from Behsud demonstrate the influence and role of the existing patronage system at the village and district levels. The fact that one candidate won 29 out of 30 votes indicates a pre-election consensus on who should lead the DDA. Jackson (2014) provides similar examples of at least three other districts in Nangarhar where ex-commanders became part of the CDC and DDA leadership (Jackson 2014:33). While DDAs have their own challenges in terms of their legitimacy and position, and interference from different provincial and district authorities (*ibid.*), they were not the only district level structure that operated in Behsud, particularly during the military surge by the US army (2009-2011).

The female deputy CDC from Qala-e-Janan Khan was also a member of the DDA and secured several projects for her village. These included a road connecting the northern part of the village with the main road and a spinning project that involved women.²⁷⁵ This confirms the point made in the earlier section on how the MRRD's interventions expanded women's public role in the village and district governance. Although she

²⁷² Interview with the DDA chief in Behsud NGR #116 dated 04.05.2012; Interview with QJK CDC and Behsud DDA female member #47 dated 03.11.2011.

²⁷³ Interview with head of Behsud DDA #116 dated 04.05.2012.

²⁷⁴ Interview with the DDA chief in Behsud NGR #116 dated 04.05.2012

²⁷⁵ Interview with QJK *malik* and CDC chief #41 dated 27.11.2011; interview with female deputy chief CDC #43 dated 28.11.2011.

operated mainly to attract resources for her own village, the fact of a woman leading resource distribution at district level is significant in a context where women's public role is under on-going threats.

The IDLG intervention

Behsud is one of nine districts in Nangarhar where the PRT provided support through the District Delivery Programme. The COIN strategy by the US government and its allies followed a combined security, governance and reconstruction or development approach – known as “Clear, Hold, Build” – in order to support provincial districts (DoD 2009:15). Behsud was incorporated as one of the ‘Comprehensive Focused District Development’ priority areas identified by the US leadership in Afghanistan (*ibid.*:78). This strategy was operationalised to provide support to the IDLG's efforts at the district level. **Chapter five** discussed how such links functioned at the wider national level, but in Behsud it was found that the previous district governor was asked to introduce a number of influential actors from different parts of the district to come together and form a council mainly to ensure its security.²⁷⁶ The Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) was implemented by the IDLG and funded by the US Department of Defence. Its purpose was to bring together the “(...) special councils of notables to better link local authorities to the population, with improved security as the principal goal” (DoD 2009:53). These ‘notables’ were also paid a salary, unlike the DDA members who were volunteers. The newly appointed Behsud district governor elaborated on the problematic outcome of the ASOP and how the pilot phase failed:

ASOP was a failed experiment, so we managed to close it down, because they were directly interfering in our work. No one knew what their role was and what they should do. One day they would come and sit in my office or in another office saying we ‘monitor’ your work! (...) I think finally this confusion resulted in their full closure of the programme. The DDA however, is better – at least they are development oriented, every time an NGO comes here and asks me if they can do something for the district, I refer them to the DDA for development projects.²⁷⁷

This assessment by the district governor was followed by one of the district officers who had served for many years in the office and remembered the initial formation of the ASOP council:

²⁷⁶ This account is based on an interview with a district official in Behsud #80 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁷⁷ Interview with Behsud District Governor #79 dated 17.03.2012.

The selected members of the ASOP council came on the recommendations of the old district governor; they were paid a salary and they were here more for their own purposes of using district resources rather than being helpful to the government's work in their areas. So the Americans closed the project. Now, there is only the DDA.²⁷⁸

Both accounts demonstrate how ASOP councils were ineffective because they focused on strengthening the position of the previous district governor who was no longer in his position. In Behsud, the members of the ASOP council were mainly loyal to the old district governor and when a new one was appointed, the council became dysfunctional.

In Qala-e-Janan Khan, for instance, Mawlawi Sami, one of the village elites, became an ASOP council member after the village *malik* was approached by the previous district governor to recommend someone for a council position that paid a monthly salary of \$120:

I sent Mawlawi Sami, he is a respected man and also because of his poor economic conditions. I selected him because he might have been upset by not being elected as CDC chief, so I sent him there and he was happy.²⁷⁹

As we can see, the reasoning and logic the *malik* used in responding to this request from the district governor was different from that intended by the initiators of this intervention. Mawlawi Sami was 'happy' with his work, because of its salary and he also (with the help of J.) succeeded in mobilising funding through the PRTs for the village high school. He was present when the school was officially inaugurated in 2009 (see Figure 7).

²⁷⁸ Interview with a Behsud district official #80 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁷⁹ Interview with QJK *malik* and CDC chief #41 dated 27.11.2011.



Figure 7: Opening of QJK school building

Persons in picture: Mawlawi Sami CDC and ASOP member and religious scholar (second right), Mohammad Ibrahim Miakheyl deputy director of provincial directorate of ministry of education (fourth right), Mullah of Grand Mosque QJK (sixth right), Haji Ghulam Farooq a central QJK elder (seventh right), Munshi Abdul Rahman the CDC Secretary (third left) and daughter of J. joined by Army Capt. Elisabeth Leon, Provincial Reconstruction Team lead engineer, inaugurating the construction of Qala-e-Janan Khan High school for girls and boys. ©Picture²⁸⁰ dated Jan.11, 2009 taken by Capt. Dustin Hart (US Air Force).

As demonstrated in the above examples from interventions by both the MRRD and IDLG, there are various differences in the nature of the space each one has filled in governance relations and in their mechanism of establishment. In Behsud the DDA was a permanent structure from 2007, with continuous funding and facilitation through the MRRD and UNDP, while ASOP was only ever piloted and has since been closed.²⁸¹

In sum, these councils have/had an important gatekeeping role (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011:17) which the district governor sought to shape and monopolise. Yet, their effectiveness in terms of representation of the rest of population and the sustainability of the councils in the absence of funding appeared to be limited. Both institutions were less about representation and the voices of local population than about creating mechanisms to funnel resources downwards and information and intelligence upwards.

²⁸⁰ Picture details are taken from the webpage of the Department of Defence <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=52689> (accessed 18.06.2014).

²⁸¹ In the period this study was conducted, the DCCs were not officially in place. So, it is not clear if the ASOP council will be revived, or if the DDA will take over as a whole in Behsud, calling itself a DCC. The IDLG notes that the ASOP closure was mainly due to the US congress not approving its budget. Although in its earlier years' report the IDLG stated that it recommended districts to keep these councils, according to Behsud officials it had been dissolved. See IDLG (2014:44)

Reviving the formalisation of the *qaryadar* system by the IDLG

In Behsud, in around 2010, the new office of *Muderyat-e-Qaryajat* was added to the administrative structure.²⁸² This sub-directorate is responsible for village affairs and registering the 'village representative' or *qaryadar*, the official version of the *malik*. Villages were asked to register a representative who was then formally recognised by the district authorities as the 'village head' or *qaryadar*. The district sub-director for village affairs in Behsud elaborated on the procedure:

Qaryadar is not an elected post. Anyone can put himself forward – write a petition, get the signatures of a few community elders, then bring it to district court. Once it is approved, we call it a *wasiqa* [a legal certificate] that confirms the person is an approved *qaryadar*. (...) The problem with this is that every day we have many people coming and claiming they are *qaryadar*. We face a challenge as the rules are not very clear on the mechanism of how the *qaryadar* should be selected or elected. This can cause conflict and disputes among communities.²⁸³

Given that there is no universally accepted definition of 'village' by the Afghan state, the district officials' registration of *qaryadars* became more problematic:

The communities have a very clear definition of what a village consists of; among themselves everyone knows what divides one village from another in their close neighbourhood. But we don't have a clear definition of 'village' to work with. The issue is the population has increased and war has created lots of disputes that divide communities rather than unifying them.²⁸⁴

This was also evident from discussions with the district governor about registered and non-registered villages, where, for instance, the CDC chiefs were not considered *qaryadars* by default. If the *qaryadar*'s position is seen as the village 'executive leader', then it becomes even more problematic, some villages having only one representative who is CDC chief, *malik* and *qaryadar* rolled into one.²⁸⁵ As Saltmarshe and Medhi (2011) noted, the *qaryadars* also operate as key informants, providing information and intelligence to the security forces, including the National Department of Security and

²⁸² Interview with a Behsud district official #80 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁸³ According to (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011:23) in some areas the *qaryadars* are also allowed to arm villages for their own protection. This was not mentioned in Behsud, but it is possible that in some insecure areas this does happen; Interview with the head of Village Affairs sub-directorate #80 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁸⁴ Interview with the head of Village Affairs sub-directorate #80 dated 17.03.2012.

²⁸⁵ See the following section for more on this example in the case of Qala-e-Janan Khan Village.

the PRTs.²⁸⁶ Consequently, the formalisation of the *qaryadar* system contributes further to strengthening a centralised system of governance, whilst also undermining the efforts towards institution building and particularly the MRRD's attempts to formalise the CDCs as local governance structures.

To conclude, this section reflected on the MRRD and IDLG interventions building upon each other as the district became a site of contested interventions by central government's ministries and their international donors. The district and village elites, as demonstrated in Qala-e-Janan Khan, used these opportunities to ensure that they benefited from interventions by receiving different types of resources and were hence able to 'deliver' to their clients.

6.5. Conclusion

This chapter examined the local governance relations that evolved as a result of local governance interventions by MRRD and IDLG (as central government institutions) in the post-2001 context of Nangarhar's Behsud district and Qala-e-Janan Khan villages as micro sites of intervention.

The chapter introduced a historical overview of socio-political and economic characteristics of the province and what shaped overall governance relations within the province and its relations with the central government and international donors who provided financial support to governance programmes in the province.

I have pointed out that Nangarhar's political elites, historically known as the *khans* and tribal leaders, in the post 1978 context have evolved and emerged into, or in instances been replaced by, strongmen or commanders who have gained power not only through local means of legitimacy (such as socio-economic status) but also through external sources of funding and controlling the provinces' revenue resources.

The chapter discussed two forms of provincial and district governance arrangements in the province: the *de jure* form of governance which includes actors and structures that are formal and part of the central government's expanded authority at the provincial level, and the *de facto* form of governance, which involves members or actors loyal to different political and politico-military groups who continue to have a monopoly over violence and economic resources in the province (Wilder and Lister 2007: 87). There is no clear line of distinction that separates the two, but the latter group has stronger influence in the political and economic aspects of provincial and district level

²⁸⁶ "Formerly we used to work for the KGB. Now we work under the CIA" (Saltmarshe and Medhi 2011:23).

governance which respectively impacted the village governance.

Introducing the particular context of Qala-e-Janan Khan village, it was discussed that village elites included a mix of pre-war and war-time, including actors who emerged as powerful players in the post-2001 context. The chapter highlighted how the village representative or *malik* monopolised the operationalisation of the MRRD and IDLG interventions in his village where he was also backed by part of the village elites. However, it was also seen how, in the process, the power dynamics in the village changed and other village elites tried to compete with the *malik*.

The chapter considered that conditionality on women's inclusion has been effective to the point of bringing women representatives into both the village and district institutions. The Qala-e-Janan Khan village example demonstrated different factors involved in selection/election of two women who initially became members of CDC, one of whom later operated effectively in the district level DDAs. However, women still faced challenges in instances where spatial factors and the broader patriarchal mindset have limited their meaningful participation in everyday practices of governance.

In sum, this overall discussion around a specific context of Nangarhar, Behsud and Qala-e-Janan Khan village informs us about the complex hybrid form of governance relations that emerges as a result of many different forms of interventions, designed for different purposes, focusing on the same local setting.

Chapter Seven

Local Responses to Governance Intervention in Bamyan



Map sources: ©BBC (left) and ©NPS (right)

7.1. Introduction

Bamyan is the second province studied here as a site of intervention. Compared to Nangarhar, Bamyan Province represents a very different socio-political and historical context. The key difference between the two provinces is that Nangarhar has always been of geopolitical importance to the Afghan state in terms of revenues and being a border province whereas Bamyan, as a central highland with limited resources for revenue, did not attract much attention. In addition, the population of Bamyan has been systematically subordinated on an ethnic and religious basis. It is at the heart of Hazarajat, the homeland of Afghanistan's Hazara people. As Shiias, and with features quite distinct from the country's other groups, the Hazaras have been subject to discrimination ever since their homeland experienced an aggressive form of intervention by the Afghan state in the late 19th century. Unlike Nangarhar, Bamyan has historically been marginal to the Durrani-dominated state. Yet, as will be shown in this chapter, the Hazara elites advanced their political influence and position at the national level during the years of war after 1978 and have managed to hold on to those gains in the post-2001 context.

This chapter provides a case study of two major local governance interventions implemented by the central government Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) in the villages of Katakhana and Akhundun in the district of Yakawlang, Bamyan. The chapter takes a historical political economy approach by analysing the historical aspects of the

local governance interventions in the context of the Hazarajat region where Bamyan lies at the centre. By looking at how patrimonial relations dominate in the mentioned settings, I will critically examine the processes of MRRD's National Solidarity Programme (NSP) implementation in the two villages. I then examine both MRRD's and IDLG's role in governance affairs at the district level.

The key purpose of this chapter is to examine how local governance relations evolved as a result of a complex process of interactions, negotiations and, at times, contestations between local actors and the MRRD's and IDLG's sponsored local governance programme interventions. It is argued that both the MRRD and IDLG interventions have changed local power dynamics by allowing new actors to emerge, opening a relatively symbolic space for women's public role in the village and also creating confusion about the roles and obligations of village leadership and village representation by formalising the village administrator or *qaryadar* positions as prior to this, the CDC chief were known to be representing each village.

This chapter is organised in five sections, including the introduction. The second section will provide an introduction to governance relations in Bamyan by first presenting the province's socio-economic characteristics, followed by a brief history of the central government's interventions in the Hazarajat region. This will be followed by a discussion of the evolution of Hazarajat politics from 1978 to 2001 and how the wartime transformations have influenced and shaped the political economy of governance relations in the post-2001 context. Section three will critically examine the overall introduction and implementation of the NSP and the strategies local elites used to adapt to the programme in order to benefit from its resources in the two villages. The section also explores the unexpected effects of the programmes on governance and gender relations. Finally in this section, I examine how the recipients of/subjects to this intervention understood the goals and outcomes of the programme. Section four will look at the district level institution building efforts by IDLG through its operations to formalise the *qaryadar* (village administrator) system and the MRRD in forming the district level institution, the District Development Assembly (DDA). The chapter concludes by considering the overall effect that MRRD and IDLG's local governance interventions had on village and district governance in this particular case. The conclusion will highlight that while these interventions resulted in changes in local power dynamics, they did not succeed in transforming or replacing existing structures or creating a sustained form of local governance institution able to lead everyday practices of local governance relations.

7.2. History of governance relations in Bamyan

7.2.1. Provincial socio-economic characteristics

Bamyan is located in the central highlands of Afghanistan, also known as Hazarajat.²⁸⁷ It is a mountainous region with harsh winters and has fallen into deep poverty in recent times. The province has a population of 406,700 (CSO 2012b). The majority are Hazaras (67.4%), with Sadaat²⁸⁸ (16%), Tajik (15.7%), Tatar (0.5%), Qizilbash (0.2%) and Pashtuns (0.1%) making up the remainder. At the national level, Hazaras are the third largest ethnic group after Pashtuns and Tajiks (Canfield 1972:2-3; Dupree 1973; Poladi 1989:47-53; Harpviken 1995; TAF 2006). Health and education levels are generally below the average of Afghanistan. The main source of revenue for 86% of Bamyan people is agriculture, and around 92% of rural households own land or small garden plots (NABDP 2012). Handicrafts and carpet weaving is another source of income where mostly women are involved. Approximately half of rural households (47%) earn income through non-farm related labour (*ibid.*). For one-third (36%) of them, livestock is an important source of income and only 4% of the population in Bamyan rely on remittances (*ibid.*).

There are different theories about the origins of the Hazara people. The dominant one holds that Hazaras are the first inhabitants of the region known as Hazarajat.²⁸⁹ Available sources, however, cannot confirm any of these theories. In any case, given Bamyan's historical position on the route of passing armies and business caravans, it is not surprising that the local population has adapted customs and concepts from different groups passing through their area. Ethnic identity is never static given people's mobility, changes of rulers and, in the course of history, it can change or be influenced by different elements. The Hazara population in Bamyan are mainly *Twelve Imam* follower Shia Muslims.

7.2.2. Historical context: Local autonomy and violent state interventions

Historically, Hazarajat was an area known for struggling to maintain its autonomy from the central government. Events in recent decades, however, have caused an important

²⁸⁷ Hazarajat or Land of Hazara contains the central highland region of Afghanistan. The boundaries of Hazarajat have never been officially demarcated. Some view Hazarajat more as an ethnic and religious zone rather than a geographical one. It is marked by Bamyan in the north, Helmand River in the south, Firozkoh to the west and Salang Pass to the east (Canfield 1972:2-3; Poladi 1989:47-53; Harpviken 1995; Khazeni 2003).

²⁸⁸ Sadaat, Sayyed or Sayed (written in different ways) refers to an honorific title for a descendant of Islam's prophet Muhammad through his grandsons (Hassan and Hussain ibn Ali) from his daughter Fatima and his son-in-law Ali (Ali ibn Abi Talib).

²⁸⁹ See for example, (Ferrier 1856:222-23). For further elaboration on other theories see (Bacon 1958:4, Schurmann 1962:115; Poladi 1989:15, 22; Mousavi 1998:23-25).

shift in relations and the local elites have become dedicated allies of the central government, especially since late 2001. In this section I will provide a brief overview of this evolution.

Until the late 19th century, the Hazarajat region was seen as an independent and autonomous territory, ruled over by local *khans* or *mirs* (Kakar 1979; Harpviken 1996; Poladi 1998; Emadi 2007:365). These leaders acted as more or less independent intermediaries or allies to the government in Kabul and state penetration in the area was limited.

In the late 19th century, funded by British subsidies, Amir Abdul Rahman Khan embarked upon a violent state expansion and taxation programme (*Emadi 2007:365*). Having succeeded in incorporating Pashtun groups into the state apparatus, the pacification of the Hazarajat region became one of the prime aims of the Amir's mission to expand the Afghan state (Kakar 1979:xxiii). He started by selectively patronising some of the local *mirs* and instigating local rivalries, but soon these tactics were replaced by a full-on military confrontation. Using ethnic and religious identities, Abdul Rahman Khan framed this mission as a 'jihad' against heretic Shiias and mobilised Pashtuns to fight Hazaras. The campaigns resulted in enslavements, land confiscation, and large scale migration of the Hazara population from their native region (*ibid.*). The purpose of incorporating Hazarajat into the central state was mainly to establish local state administrations and initiate a harsh form of taxation (Harpviken 1996:31). The new state administration at the district and provincial levels had, since Abdul Rahman Khan came into power, been dominated by Pashtuns who acted as government administrators by setting up deals with local notables (Kakar 1979; Harpviken 1996:32). This also meant that the patrimonial system of rule remained in place for patrons to operate between the state and their clients as mediators (Harpviken 1996). In the context of Hazarajat, mediators continued to be *mirs* who operated through *arbab* or *qaryadar* representatives.

The Amir's successors eased some of the discriminative practices against the Hazaras²⁹⁰ but discrimination in different forms continued for decades to come, from political isolation to negligence in terms of access to resources and services (Harpviken 1996; Emadi 2007:367). Since the 1950s, in the new democracy period, Hazara leaders have continued to demand further recognition and rights that has resulted in

²⁹⁰ For instance, Habibullah Khan (1901-1919) who replaced Amir Abdur Rahman allowed those who were forced to leave their lands to return. Amanullah Khan (1919-1929) banned slavery and reformed land rights and evicted some of the nomads who were occupying the Hazara grazing lands by order of Amir Abdur Rahman (Harpviken 1996:32).

their gradual inclusion in the political system and greater access to services (Harpviken 1996). Village governance has never been part of the formal government institutions, but according to Monsutti (2005) in the Hazarajat region, the term *qaryadar* was used to refer to the person who, prior to the 1964 constitution, was known as a *mehtar* and whose role was to represent a cluster of villages or a *mantega*. The *qaryadar* was proposed by the heads of families and appointed by the government representative (Monsutti 2005:91).

By the 1970s, Hazara elites had managed to access some influence and political representation at the national level. For instance, in the Afghan parliament of 1946-1948 there were only six representatives from Hazarajat, whereas in the 1969-1972 parliament there were seventeen (Nayel 2002:444, 446). Hazara intellectual elites gradually became part of various political movements, but the rest of population in Hazarajat continued to live under patron-client relationships (Harpviken 1995:33-36; 55). However the years of Soviet invasion, civil war and the years of conflict that followed afterwards would see dramatic shifts in the relationship between Hazarajat and the centre.

During the PDPA rule, from 1978 onwards, the Hazarajat region was one of the areas where the communist government launched its rapid reforms, including land reform and challenging the existing role of traditional and religious leaders such as *mirs* and *sayyeds* (Roy 1986:97; Harpviken 1996:55).²⁹¹ Therefore the reforms targeted the prevailing power structures that constituted the 'feudal' patrimonial system. This prompted the rapid mobilisation of the population, led by the traditional and religious leaders to organise uprisings and revolts against the regime and Soviet invasion (Harpviken 1995:55, 62; Mousavi 1998; Dorronsoro 2005:8-9). In the context of Hazarajat, 'traditional' leaders referred to the *mirs* or *khans*, who in the pre-war context were the major land-owners and mediating actors between the central state and population, as well as the religious clergies or *sayyeds* who were closely allied with the *khans*. *Sayyeds*' religious status and their economic privileges of earning a fifth of the Islamic taxation or *khums*²⁹² gave them higher status.²⁹³ As Monsutti (2005) points out, the *sayyeds*' historically self-bestowed superiority over Hazaras on the basis of

²⁹¹ Interview with aid worker #67, 03.04.2012.

²⁹² *Khums* refers to one fifth of all gains or the annual taxation that as part of the five pillars of Islam, every Shiia Muslim is obligated to pay. For Sunni Muslims, however only Zakat is obligatory.

²⁹³ For more elaboration on the socio-political aspects of *sayyeds*' relations with Hazaras see (Monsutti 2005:91-92).

religious belief has become a source of Hazara - Sayyed conflict particularly since the broader turmoil experienced by Afghanistan and the Hazarajat region.²⁹⁴

The Hazarajat elites have, since the 1980s, included the *mirs*, the 'traditional mullahs',²⁹⁵ or *sayyeds*, the sheikhs and the radical seculars (Harpviken 1996:28). All these different elites have played an important role in managing the political and economic relations in the region. Five important characteristics have defined Hazarajat's political economy of governance relations since the 1980s:

1) The Hazarajat region, in particular Bamyan, was one of the first areas liberated by local anti-government forces as early as 1980.²⁹⁶ The years of war, similar to other parts of the country, resulted in the emergence of a new class of politico-military actors, who were externally financed through the Iranian government as well as Shiia religious networks. By 1989, there were at least eight different groups or parties. In 1989, *Hezb-e-Wahdat* (Unity Party) was formed,²⁹⁷ and its leadership moved to Kabul to take part in the civil war in order to gain their share of power at the national level (Harpviken 1996:vii; Ibrahimi 2009b).

2) Once the government had been toppled, and an autonomous form of rule established (Harpviken 1996), a civil war broke out among different rival factions that in part were supported by Iran, and internal conflicts continued until 1992. In this period, the major conflict was between the traditional leaders – *mirs* and *Sayyeds* on the one hand and the newly emerging *Sheikhs*,²⁹⁸ trained, financed and supported by Iran, on the other hand. This conflict intensified in the 1990s after the *Sheikhs* united under the banner of *Hezb e Wahdat* (Unity Party) and adopted a more Hazara nationalist agenda.

3) During the collapse of the Kabul regime in 1992, the *Hezb-e-Wahdat* elites decided to move to Kabul, so as to take part directly in the civil war over power sharing at the national level. This move by the party although led to violent participation as every

²⁹⁴ According to (Monsutti 2005:240), despite their reputation among the Hazaras as 'lazy and smug', sayyeds are indeed mediators who follow different norms of conduct on the basis of moderation and equanimity.

²⁹⁵ In the context of Hazarajat, *Mullah-e-Sunnati* or traditional mullah refers to those mullahs who were not part of the newly formed Shiia Islamist groups.

²⁹⁶ According to (Harpviken 1996:62) by the summer of 1979 most of Hazarajat was already liberated from the government's control for the first time since Abdur Rahman's campaign in the 1890s.

²⁹⁷ According to (Ibrahimi 2009a) the establishment of *Hezb-e-Wahdat* is considered an important move to avoid the smaller scattered Shiia groups' dependency on Iran and the party emerged stronger and acted more autonomously.

²⁹⁸ *Sheikh* refers to the clergy who were trained in Iran, both in terms of religious studies as well as military training and were financed to form their own fronts or politico-military groups.

other Mujahiddin groups,²⁹⁹ it has opened the space for the Hazara factions to join the national level conflict over power and authority. At the same time, some of the Sayyed-led factions of Hazarajat joined other, non-Hazara groups in the massacre of Hazara civilians in Afshar in Kabul as the capital was engulfed in a civil war amongst the victorious Mujahiddin (*ibid.*). According to many of my Hazara informants³⁰⁰ the Sayeed groups' support of the massacre led the Hazara leadership to declare that the khums payment to Sayyeds should be stopped, fuelling the conflict even further.

4) Taliban rule from 1996 pushed Hazarajat leadership back to the peripheries, although the Hazarajat leaders continued to struggle for political and military authority for the region and beyond.³⁰¹

5) In terms of economic resources and revenues, the years of war also resulted in three different forms of external revenues flowing into the region. The external funding to the politico-military factions (primarily from Iran) contributed to monetising the overall political economy of the Hazarajat region, including Bamyan. For the ordinary population, one form was remittances, a result of increased levels of mobility and migrations (Monsutti 2005). Another form was the provision of basic services through NGOs contributing to social welfare in the absence of service provision by central government.

In sum, in this part, I have highlighted how Hazara elites evolved after years of marginalisation and discrimination by the central state, to become strong players in the regional politics of their own area as well as pushing their way through means of violence (participating in the civil war) to political power at national level. The changes in the economy of the region due to years of war, mobility and migration to a large extent also affected the overall socio-political aspects of governance relations. Local governance relations throughout the years of war was organised through the different politico-military elites of the region who took part in the turbulent and volatile history of anti-Soviet war (1979-1982), the Hazarajat civil war (1982-1986) and the battle for power sharing (1992-1996) followed by retreat to local resistance against the Taliban (1996-2001). Subsequently, the Hazara elites were to evolve as comparatively

²⁹⁹ There are records of drastic human rights abuses and severe destruction of Kabul city by the Mujahiddin in fighting during the early and mid 1990s in which Hezb-e-Wahdat was also an active player. United States Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Afghanistan (2003) Information on Hezb-e Wahdat*. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3f5203a34.html> (accessed 22 September 2014).

³⁰⁰ Based on author's conversation with Hazaras from Ghazni and Kabul.

³⁰¹ The Hazara anti-Taliban fronts in Bamyan, Balkh's Mazar-e-Sharif and Samangan's Robatak areas came under the worst attacks by the Taliban. See (Canfield 2004; Ibrahimi 2009b).

significant actors both at the regional (within Hazarajat) and national level. They were included in the post-2001 political settlement and became a strong and committed strategic partner to the US and its allies in the War on Terror.

7.2.3. Governance characteristics in the post-2001

Following the inclusion of key Hazara leaders in the Bonn Conference (in 2001), ostensibly acting as a unified group, the Hazarajat leadership continued to be scattered in the later years of post-2001 political settlement. Nevertheless, this strategic choice of the Hazara elites collectively allying themselves with the Kabul government and its international supporters, resulted in a significant level of stability and security in the Hazarajat regions.

Formal and informal local governance in Bamyan was divided, reflecting the fault lines at the national level and the linkages between local networks and constellations of power in Kabul. As mentioned, the apparent homogeneity of the Hazara leadership at the national level and their collective influence over Hazarajat and other areas with a Hazara population, does not apply to its internal politics, which continue to be shaped by factions and regrouping (Ibrahimi 2009b). For instance, in Bamyan, different actors affiliated with war-time politico-military factions compete for key appointments within the administration including provincial and district posts of governors, police chief, heads of primary and district courts, as well as members of parliament (Canfield 2004; Ibrahimi 2009b). Political affiliations are a pre-condition to gaining a governmental position or provincial representation.³⁰² MPs and other individuals aiming to gain a certain governmental position reach out to the leadership of one of the major Hazara elite factions in Kabul and use this as a channel to get a position at the sub-national level. An example of this was a provincial council member from the Yakawlang district who once ran as an independent candidate and was accused of having armed men, thus disqualifying him for office, but when he ran a second time as a member of Hezb-e-Wahdat, he won and no accusations were made against him.³⁰³ This example illustrates the level of influence of different established politico-military groups and the continuance of their strong patronage networks.

³⁰² Habiba Sarabi's appointment as the governor of Bamyan was somewhat of an exception. It was ordered directly by President Karzai (bypassing his second Vice-President Karim Khalili's preference). Sarabi was later able to secure international backing too. Her support by the Palace, international support and the fact that she was not part of any of the Hazarajat competing political factions enabled her to serve as a relatively popular governor for much longer than many others in the position. Sarabi stepped down in late 2013 to run for a vice-presidential position in the first round of presidential elections in 2014.

³⁰³ Interview with Provincial Council Member Mr Haidar Ali Ahmadi #99, 24.05.2012.

The actors and power brokers in post-2001 Bamyan are allied to a diverse number of groups and factions who rose to power at different times over the past three decades. Some pre-war elites (*mirs* and *Sayyeds*) remain important, maintaining relations with clients in which the latter provide loyalty in return for access to resources, positions of power and, indeed, protection as a whole (Lemarchand and Legg 1972:151 cited in Beekers and van Gool 2012:6). These patronage relations though, are not solely regionally based. Instead, within the same locality one could find loyalties to different elites who live in the same village, *manteqa*, district or province. Monsutti points out that geographical identity among the Hazaras in general was seen as a more important form of identity than tracing family origins and tribal identity (Monsutti 2005). An interesting additional form of identity has also been created as a result of war where individuals or families were referred to in relation to their politico-military affiliations, for instance as followers of a particular *tanzim* or politico-military group. Consequently, multiplicity of actors meant the existence of competing patronage networks where a population within the same locality can be divided by choosing to support one or another elite.

The key Hazara political elites included Karim Khalili who is currently (2014) Karzai's second vice-president; Haji Mohammad Muhaqiq, a running mate for Abdullah Abdullah in the 2014 elections; and Akbari, an MP who supported Muhaqiq in the recent political coalitions during elections in 2014. They all lead different factions of Hezb-e-Wahdat. Sadiq Mudaber who works in the president's office and has his own political party is also emerging as a new power broker in the region.³⁰⁴

Women's role in Hazarajat politics, particularly in the pre-2001 context has been under-researched. Most scholars who have studied the political processes in Hazarajat, have referred to women as victims, both historically and in the recent years of war (Harpviken 1996:52; Canfield 2004:243; Monsutti 2005; Emadi 2007:366, 368, 381). Emadi (2007) writes about the wives of traditional *mirs* known in Hazaragi as '*agha*'. He points out that a wife from the same social class as her husband was able to play an active role in social affairs and to stand next to her husband at public events (Emadi 2007:364). In the post-1979 context however, the only reference to the public and political role of women is in relation to the inclusion of women as members of the Hezb-e-Wahdat central council (Emadi 2007; 385-386; Ibrahimi 2009:5). In the post-2001 context, most of these women remained relatively invisible, none having as much

³⁰⁴ See (Ibrahimi 2009b) for further details on Hazarajat political elites in the post-2001 context.

public presence as much as their male counterparts.³⁰⁵ Canfield (2004) briefly references Benard who mentions Hazara women complaining about the Wahdat party's discriminatory behaviour towards women (Benard 2002 cited in Canfield 2004:261). The inclusion of a few women in the party's leadership could be also seen more as a token gesture by the party, in order to attract the attention of future potential western allies and funders.³⁰⁶

Post-2001 context: The international footprint in Hazarajat

The presence of the International Security Allied Forces (ISAF), a large New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Bamyan city and a smaller unit in Yakawlang, was seen as a source for stability by the majority of local residents although they were not involved in any military or combat operations within Yakawlang.³⁰⁷ The funding channelled through the military here was far less than in Nangarhar. The total expenditure of USA-funded projects managed by the New Zealand PRT was US \$25 million. The NATO mission in the province spent US \$29.3 million while the Singaporean Army spent only US \$481,000 (*ibid.*). Most of this funding in Bamyan was used for service provision in close cooperation with the governor's office.³⁰⁸ The ISAF presence was also seen as support for Habiba Sarabi, the provincial governor who, unaffiliated to the Hezb-e-Wahdat party, was repeatedly challenged by her rivals; the faction led by Vice President Karim Khalili tried many different ways to replace Sarabi with a member of their own patronage network. However Sarabi, who had President Karzai's support, managed to use the presence of the ISAF and PRTs as leverage to resist these local rivalries. The ISAF and the PRTs had little direct interaction with local communities; instead the governor's office took the lead in directing how the PRT project, particularly the Commander's Emergency Response Programme (CERP), funding should be spent.³⁰⁹ Bamyan was seen as a 'success story' for the ISAF forces (Prendergast 2010) but stability was in the main, less to do with the international

³⁰⁵ (Ibrahimi 2009a) provided a full list of the ten Women's Committee members. Although, Dr Sima Samar's name is not included on the list, she was said to be affiliated with the party in the earlier years.

³⁰⁶ In a video of the meeting (1988) in which the Wahdat council of leadership confirms Dr Sima Samar's membership and thanks her for her social services to Hazarajat, there are English speaking representatives (perhaps from the UN and NGOs) and Karim Khalili's words are translated into English for them. <http://youtu.be/RDExEoE8LAU> (accessed on 31.05.2014).

³⁰⁷ During its presence in Bamyan, the New Zealand Army has spent approximately NZ\$ 80.36 million on Afghanistan in different sectors such as sustainable development (37%), education (15%), governance, justice and rule of law (21%), humanitarian assistance and reconstruction (22%) (The New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2013)

³⁰⁸ Interview with Governor Sarabi #11, 20.08.2011; Interview with Richard Prendergast (PRT NZ Chief of Mission) #112 28.05.2012.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Governor Sarabi #11, 20.08.2011; Interview with Richard Prendergast (PRT NZ Chief of Mission) #112, 28.05.2012.

presence than the political coalitions formed by power-brokers and elites from the region.

The Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development (MRRD) is represented by two major offices in Bamyan: one the ministry's provincial directorate and the second a separate office for the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). It should be noted that the NSP, by its nature, was designed to bypass most of the district and provincial governance procedures. In other words, relations between the NSP office and the rest of the provincial governor's office were minimal and the office left its representation to the MRRD provincial department. Funding approval for most of the MRRD programme, including the NSP was highly centralised and led from Kabul.³¹⁰

The Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) in Bamyan operates through the provincial and district governors' offices. They maintain direct relations and provide administrative support to the governors at provincial and district offices. Given that IDLG's major programmatic funding was focused on insecure provinces, which Bamyan was not, programmes such as Afghan Social Outreach or District Delivery Programmes did not operate in Bamyan province. IDLG's key role in the province included providing support to the provincial and district governor's offices and approving the appointments of the governors (provincial and district) from Kabul.

7.3. Village governance interventions

7.3.1. Katakhana and Akhundun as micro site(s) of interventions



³¹⁰ Interview with Eng. Sayyed Anwar, the provincial director of NSP in Bamyan #6, 17.08.2012.



Figure 8: a) Map of Yakawlang District ©AIMS. b) Locations of Upper Katakhana (west), Lower Katakhana (south) and Akhundun (east) ©Google Maps

Katakhana and Akhundun³¹¹ are located in the northern part of the centre of Yakawlang district (see Figure 8) The valley is divided by a river and the two villages lie on the north bank, separated by a big rocky hill known locally as 'Kala Sang' or 'The Headstone'. Katakhana is the larger village and divided into lower and upper parts. In total, 212 families live in the villages,³¹² the majority of whom are Sayyeds although Akhundun also has a smaller community of Hazaras. Katakhana is the location of one of the two main wheat mills in the area. There are two mosques and two *hussainias*³¹³ in both the upper and lower parts of Katakhana³¹⁴ Akhundun, historically formed around a small old mosque, has one of two large *madrassas* in central Yakawlang and a new building that includes the renovated old mosque and a *hussainia*.³¹⁵ The villages are in relatively close proximity (around 0.5-1.5km) to the district centre where the Yakawlang district headquarters and central market (Nayak Bazaar) are located. The residents from both villages have access to the resources at the centre such as the high school for girls and boys, and the health clinic in Nayak Bazaar. There are also more chances

³¹¹ See **chapter three** in this thesis for further elaboration on selection of field sites.

³¹² UNH's 2003 survey for NSP listed 220 families. The number of 212 families is based on BRAC's survey and mapping of the village which was shown to me by district officer. The breakdown is: Upper Katakhana 78, Lower Katakhana 67 and Akhundun 67 families. Interview with BRAC representative in Yakawlang #110, 25.05.2012. Interview with UNH District Manager in Yakawlang #22, 01.10.2011.

³¹³ A *hussainia* is a congregation hall for Shiia commemoration ceremonies, marriages and other ceremonies especially those associated with the Remembrance of Muharram.

³¹⁴ A mosque is only used for prayers, while entrance to *hussainias* is less restricted (especially for women). The *hussainia* in Akhundun is a large hall with a capacity of over 2000; it is also used for commemorating Martyrs' Day.

³¹⁵ The ex-chief of CDC for both villages, Haji Sayyed S., took care of building the new *madrassa* in 2005. He claimed US \$40,000 was spent on the mosque, however, the estimated costs according to local informants was at least US \$100,000. The source of funding was not openly spoken about but I learnt from different sources that traditional religious institutions in Najaf, Iraq financed it.

for them to attract resources from NGOs in comparison to some of the very remote villages in the district. During the time of field research around five NGOs were active in Katakhanah and Akhundand.³¹⁶ This also included a UN agency UN-Habitat who is the NSP Facilitating Partners in Yakawlang district. Both villages have small (or tiny) paved roads suitable in most parts only for a motorbike. Residents of both villages have access to electricity through a joint intra-village cluster project funded by the NSP.³¹⁷



Figure 9: Akhundand Mosque and Hossainia.
The banner refers to the commemoration of the Taliban massacre's Martyrs Day in 2014. According to the organisers around 2500 men and women took part in the event. Photo by (c)SAAJS.com

Historically, this area and some neighbouring villages were under the rule of a local *arbab*. Ahmad Hussain Arbab, who is in his late 70s and lives in Katakhanah was the *arbab* for this area before the years of war.³¹⁸ According to local residents, when there were issues that required help and support, they would first go to Ahmad Hussain Arbab, and as he himself explained, if he could not solve the problem then he would refer them to the district headquarters.

After the NSP intervention, the first elected CDC chief for both Katakhanah and Akhundand, Haji Sayyed S., became one of the most influential figures in the two villages. A resident of Katakhanah, he leads the Sadeqia Madrasa in Akhundand and was

³¹⁶ Interview with villager from Katakhanah, also head of agricultural cooperative #38, 01.10.2011; Interview with an old farmer from Akhundand #29, 29.09.2011; Interview with female CDC chief #24, 30.09.2011; Interview with ex-CDC chief, Katakhanah #16, 23.08.2011.

³¹⁷ See section 3.1. in this chapter for details on this project.

³¹⁸ Most of villages in central Yakawlang were under Hussain Arbab's control. His role was mainly to mediate local residents' relations with the district government, collect taxes, etc.; Interview with local *arbab* for the area, Katakhanah #30, 30.10.2011.

in charge of renovating the large Akhundān mosque and hussainia. He is also a leading member of the Shora-e-Ejtemayee or Social Council of Yakawlang. This council is mainly Sayyed-led and brought together district elites who are not affiliated with the different factions of the Wahdat Party. After the *qaryadar* positions were formalised in Yakawlang (in 2010), Haji S. was no longer in formal contact with the district headquarters, both villages having their own *qaryadar*. The two village mosques each have an imam, both appointed upon the suggestion of locals. Both imams are unpaid, earning their living apart from their religious duties. Another influential actor in Akhundān before his death was Ayatullah Sadeqi, a highly respected traditional religious leader who founded the Akhundān Madrasa in the 1970s. The grand mosque in Akhundān is led by Sayyed Nabi, an imam who holds dual degrees (religious and secular) from Islamabad and Kabul. To conclude, the leadership of the two villages is more fragmented and not monopolised by one person or group, as it was during the pre-war period. However, as the former *arbab* and other informants in the village confirmed, the ex-CDC chief (Haji S.) remains one of the most influential people in the village.

The old *arbab* recounted some of the history of local governance and how it had evolved over time. Changes are partly generational with relatively younger leaders taking over from the elderly, but what the history of Hazarajat and, in particular the history of this village shows, is that there has been more than simply a generational transitional shift, and this is linked to new classes of actor emerging during the war years. The ex-*arbab* was surprised when asked to speak about his role in the past: “I am a dead person, no one coming here talks to me any more. I wonder why you are interested in what I think?”³¹⁹

His words are illustrative of a more general phenomenon in which the ‘traditional’ village elites have been replaced by new elites who came to power in war time and have maintained their position during the post 2001 period. He agreed that the CDCs have taken over the entire leadership of the village:

[...] Now it is the CDC who is doing it all [leading the village]. They do not let the people know about anything. There are lots of disputes and arguments. In the past, we had good leadership, all were unified. Now everyone speaks and walks

³¹⁹ Interview with local village elder and old *arbab*, Katakhanā #30, 30.10.2011.

according to their own way. Now, the CDC chief is the *hamakara* [jack of all trades].”³²⁰

His reference to ‘everyone speaks and walks according to their own way’ reflects on the multiplicity of the actors involved in dealings with the district centre on behalf of the village, as well as in everyday practices of governance at the village level. I will elaborate on this below:

The overall political economy of the two villages is characterised by a massive loss of human resources, particularly men, due to the war. The most significant event in these two villages’ recent history was the Taliban massacre of local villagers in January 2001. According to local informants, in January 2001 as many as 178 men of different ages were massacred, most of whom were from the central part of Yakawlang district, including a large number from Katakhana and Akhundun.³²¹ A large number of war widows depend entirely on the rest of the village for survival.³²² By 2003, after three years of drought and heavy fighting in the area, the displaced families started to return to their half or completely destroyed houses to resettle. NGOs were active in providing shelter and housing as well as health and emergency assistance. The politico-military groups (mainly different factions of Hezb-e-Wahdat and Harakat-e-Islami- Anwari) were focusing their energy on the national level bargaining for seats in the cabinet and finding their place in the post-2001 new political settlement. This meant that initially they did not pay much attention to developments at the very local level. However, with the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2005 respectively, the need to restore and strengthen patronage networks at the local level was revived. Competing actors among Hazarajat elites returned to districts and villages campaigning for people’s votes. Consequently, their influence through formal and informal governance and religious institutions continued to shape local governance relations in the local settings and beyond.

It has to be stated that the linkages between micro (village) level elites and the politico-military and other political elites was not highly visible or openly discussed by village informants. Almost none of the village informants discussed their political affiliations,

³²⁰ Interview with local village elder and old arbab #30, 30.10.2011.

³²¹ The Taliban massacre in the winter of 2000-2001 affected mostly the Kot-e-Sadaat or areas closer to the district centre (HRW 2001).

³²² A collective decision by most of the Yakawlang residents was that the younger war widows should be married off. So, only relatively elderly widows and those who had teenage or older sons remained unmarried.

Interview with male resident of neighbouring village #21 20.08.2011; Interview with female school teacher #106, 26.05.12

due, I believe, to the violent history of political factionalism that led to the massacres and human losses in the area. Nonetheless, by looking at the socio-political background of some of the village elites, it is possible to assume that most of the current actors in the two villages are still loyal to Hazara political elites who are not part of the Hezb-e-Wahdat factions.

7.3.2. Introducing NSP in the villages

Like Behsud in Nangarhar, Bamyan province and Yakawlang district were one of the initial sites for the NSP programme.³²³ According to NSP records, the Katakana and Akhund³²⁴ (K&A) Community Development Council (CDC) was granted US \$96,326 in total which was dispersed in two rounds of block-grant in two phases. Projects included transportation, solar power panels, building a gabion (retaining) wall to protect the village from seasonal floods and another road.³²⁵

The introduction of NSP in Katakana and Akhund was experienced by local communities as a novel form of encounter with the Kabul government. Rather than the historical practice of extracting resources through taxation or conscription, Kabul representatives came asking them about their needs and how they could help. Therefore, the introduction of a service delivery programme (as it was seen by people) was well received and supported by village elites in K&A who, in most cases, continued to have politico-military affiliations to the previous factions in Hazarajat. Their focus was to ensure that they and their clients could benefit from these development interventions. Hence, the NSP introduction was relatively smooth and easy.

As in the QJK case in Nangarhar, the UN-H Social Mobilisers (SMs) first introduced the NSP to community elders from Katakana. The Social Mobilisers received comprehensive training before starting their work in the field³²⁶ and follow predefined steps outlined in the NSP operational manual.³²⁷ The starting or entry point of NSP is communication with the village elders and elites, defined as 'community mobilisation' in the manual.³²⁸ Social mobilisers are a pair of male and female staff who go together to

³²³ The Programme was launched in May/June of 2003 and by October the Bamyan office was established. Within the same year, the programme implementation was begun by UN-Habitat (UNH) in Yakawlang and Bamyan city. Interview with Eng. Sayyed Anwar, the provincial director of NSP in Bamyan #6, 17.08.2014; Interview with UN-Habitat representative, Bamyan, #111, 29.05.2012

³²⁴ I will use K&A as an abbreviation for Katakana and Akhund villages in this section.

³²⁵ Email communication with NSP Office at MRRD, Kabul, 28.12.2013

³²⁶ Interview with SMs in Yakawlang #17, 23.08.2011.

³²⁷ See **chapter five**, section two for further analysis of the NSP operational manual.

³²⁸ "The FP holds preliminary discussions with key stakeholder groups in each community to introduce the NSP" (MRRD 2009:15) NSP Operational Manual Version V.

a village and meet men and women separately. “Men went to mosques and we went to a house to meet women and inform them about the NSP”, one female social mobiliser said.³²⁹

Often ‘stakeholders’ were defined as Resh-Safeedan or elderly men, *arbab/malik/mir, imam/mullah* and other key figures in the community. Although commanders or sub-commanders in the villages are also important players with power across the country, in the case of K&A none of the informants, including social mobilisers, specifically mentioned that such actors had participated in the NSP process. The social mobilisers explained NSP goals and objectives and also what conditionalities the programme required.

The NSP manual has a specific emphasis on the “local-governance and capacity building” role of NSP: “**the emphasis should be on the local-governance and capacity building aspects of the programme and not be limited to the potential block grant and sub-projects alone**” (MRRD 2009:15, emphasis in original). The ‘capacity building’ included two forms of training to be provided in the course of the programme implementation. These were ‘informal’ training on the CDC election procedures and organising formation of CDCs and a series of ‘formal’ training on techniques and management skills around the ‘sub-projects’ preparation and implementation. However, recipients generally only attended the training sessions in order to get the block-grants, and had little interest in broader questions of local governance.

As Chapter Five illustrated, some of the facilitating partners (FPs) of NSP insisted that the programme’s goal went beyond small-scale projects and charity. However, the broader agenda of the NSP; a more democratic and participatory form of governance at the local level, was rarely explained to the communities by the facilitating partners who themselves were often more familiar with charity work. Often, the conservative outlook of the facilitating partners made them reluctant to frame their efforts in terms of an apolitical agenda that would transform local governance.³³⁰ Hence, in K&A too, the financial and resource provision aspect of the programme was highlighted by the social mobilisers, leading to misunderstandings. As the previous CDC chief explained:

They [the SMs] told us that the NSP entitles each family to \$200 and this created a big misunderstanding until we learnt how it really worked. I remember in one of

³²⁹ Interview with SMs in Yakawlang #17, 23.08.2011.

³³⁰ Interview with development practitioners from DACAAR # 124, UNH #87, SCA #128 in Kabul, 11.06.2012, 18.04.2012 and 18.06.2012 respectively.

the introductory sessions held in our mosque, when they said this again, I asked them: so give us a letter signed by your boss that confirms this. The officer was not ready to do it. Still, this news spread around the village and every family was expecting to receive \$200! It was only later in the process that we realised this funding entitlement was for the public interest of village. It took us a long time to explain that to people. Villagers felt that either UN-Habitat or we at CDC were stealing that money! The SMs were very weak.³³¹

The ‘weakness’ of the UN-Habitat staff in conveying the aims, objectives and mechanisms of NSP is evident in the account narrated above. Often the SMs were not highly trained development practitioners. They were hired locally and their knowledge of development limited to a few workshops and courses at best. Female SMs were even less qualified than men, given the restrictions they faced due to their family responsibilities, gender roles and lack of access to education. According to some of the senior facilitating partner staff in Kabul, this was one of their main challenges.³³² The ‘weakness’ of facilitators is not unique to this context or even to Afghanistan, but in a context of war and its associated effects on human capital, and relatively large funding flows, they were particularly pronounced.³³³

As a comparatively less conservative area, Hazarajat saw fewer constraints on women’s participation than Nangarhar. Moreover, the villages of K&A had been exposed to NGOs’ projects and programmes for a very long time, and women benefited from these projects too. However, local residents’ previous experience with earlier projects made them understand NSP in similar terms; as a way of gaining access to resources. In other words, and as illustrated below, the participation of women was seen as a way of securing access to additional resources that came through the NSP rather than substantive change in women’s participation in local governance.³³⁴

At the mobilisation stage, the Operational Manual of the NSP emphasises women’s participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups.³³⁵ However, speaking with SMs on the ground, it was clear that they primarily relied on village elders to identify participants. In

³³¹ Interview with Ex CDC chief of K&A #16, 23.08.2011.

³³² Interview with development practitioners DACAAR, UNH, SCA in Kabul.

³³³ Mansuri and Rao summarise experiences from all different contexts in which either due to lack of experience, rush to achieve results, or simply overlooking the project goals because they contradicted their personal interests or incentives, the facilitating field workers failed to explain the actual goals and objectives of the programme (Mansuri and Rao 2004:24).

³³⁴ Interview with female CDC chief #24, 30.09.2011; Interview with CDC secretary #27, 30.09.2011.

³³⁵ “Inclusion of vulnerable groups is an absolute must in this process.” NSP Operational Manual, Version V (MRRD 2009:15).

other words, the power of inclusion (or exclusion) of the village population was not in the hand of the SMs, but that of the elders who gathered in the mosque and the women who gathered on their suggestion.

It was hard to establish whether the SMs were able to include all the different groups of 'vulnerable' members of the village as questions of vulnerability are complex in a context like Katakhanah and Akhundand, where almost everyone – including the old *arbab* and the young teacher – had been victimised by different phases of war and its implications as well as suffering from poverty. It is obvious that each community has its own dynamics, people who are privileged and those who are not. The fact that the manual for the initial phase suggested meeting 'stake-holders' as the entry point to village means the SMs had no choice but to rely on the existing village power structures and actors to allow them to meet and inform villagers.

7.3.3. Local governance through NSP in Katakhanah and Akhundand

When the social mobilisers introduced the NSP to villagers in Katakhanah and conducted a full survey counting the families in the two parts of the village, they realised that the village was too small to form a CDC on its own.³³⁶ Hence, the facilitating partners suggested that Katakhanah and Akhundand form a joint CDC.³³⁷

There is no formal record of the negotiations between the two villages leading to the agreement to form a joint CDC, but local informants explained that both were well aware that the opportunity to get access to resources would be lost if they did not. These negotiations also included an important point about the leadership of CDC: the elites from both villages agreed that if the CDC chief elected was from Katakhanah, the Deputy Chief of CDC ought to be from Akhundand.³³⁸ The facilitating partners were not present in this meeting, but they later informed the villagers that the deputy chief position should be occupied by a woman.³³⁹ As a result, the village elites agreed that this woman who will fill the deputy chief position, should be from Akhundand.

The CDC formation process itself began with a mass gathering of villagers in the local grand mosque.³⁴⁰ The social mobilisers who facilitated the process divided villagers into

³³⁶ The NSP criterion for CDC formation is a minimum of 200 families.

³³⁷ Interview with male SMs of UNH in Yakawlang #17,; 23.08.2011; Interview with ex-chief CDC K&A #16, 23.08.2011; Interview with female deputy chief CDC in K&A #105, 27.05.2012.

³³⁸ Interview with female deputy chief of CDC in K&A #105, 27.05.2012; Interview with CDC member from Akhundand #25, 30.09.2011; Interview with CDC secretary #27, 30.09.2011.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Interview with ex-chief CDC K&A #16, 23.08.2011; Interview with CDC secretary #27 30.09.2011.

five clusters and each cluster elected one representative. A female CDC member, who became the deputy chief explained the process:

When the UN-Habitat people first came and gathered us, all the women looked at me and said, 'You are the best choice to represent us.' They said to UN-Habitat staff: 'We want her to be our representative.' I don't know why they wanted me. But maybe because they knew I was outspoken in demanding support for widows and poor families and also because I am a widow myself. So the UN staff divided us into five clusters and I got votes from all clusters.³⁴¹

The results, as predicted by the village elites, was the election of Haji S. from Katakhan as chief and N. from Akhundun as deputy chief. The CDC chief and his deputy are the two main actors in the village contacted by NGOs and other institutions. This gave N. an important gatekeeping role where, for instance, she became the prime point of contact for NGOs and other institutions who were interested in bringing in women-focused projects and resources to the area:

When other NGOs come and contact me, I distribute their material to all the women. For example, COAR NGO came here and they had 2100 chickens to be distributed for 300 women, so for each woman we gave 7 chickens. I helped with the whole process.³⁴²

In the past, generally only men were approached by outsiders regarding the distribution of aid. In other words, despite the fact that N.'s voice within the village CDC leadership was not heard or given much importance, the fact that she was received by other external interveners positively affected her status and position in the community and beyond.³⁴³ In the case of the CDC chief Haji S., the CDC position bolstered his already influential position. The role he played as CDC chief and gatekeeper for different resources coming to the two villages, including overseeing the reconstruction and expansion of the large grand mosque and hussainia in Akhundun, no doubt added further to his authority.

³⁴¹ Interview with female deputy chief of CDC in K&A #105, 27.05.2012.

³⁴² Interview with female deputy chief of CDC #24, 30.09.2011

³⁴³ This status helped her to go beyond her village or K&A CDC to representing men and women in the district DDA for ten villages.



Figure 10: The previous CDC chief posing next to his guest hall. ©photo by author
He is an influential figure in Katakhan and Akhund; in the background is his private guesthouse ©Photo by author.

The major activity of the CDCs was to identify and then prioritise the village needs. Both male and female CDC members listed their priorities which were then voted on. The projects approved for the K&A CDC were mainly infrastructural and beneficial to both villages.³⁴⁴ They included paving the roads between the villages and the district centre, solar power for both villages, and a gabion wall to protect villages from seasonal floods from Akhund to Katakhan and the district centre.³⁴⁵ According to male CDC members these projects were for the public benefit, but female CDC members complained that none of their demands and priorities were addressed in any of these projects.³⁴⁶

According to Haji S., the CDC did not play much of a role in resolving conflicts in the village. Instead, the social shura, or *Shura-e-Ejtemayee*, took care of non-developmental or project related matters. As Haji S. stated: "The mother of all shuras in Yakawlang is the social shura."³⁴⁷

The villagers of both K&A dealt with intra-village issues themselves rather than bring them to the CDC, which was more of an ad hoc and pragmatic institution set up to meet

³⁴⁴ Interview with the new CDC Chief #23, 01.10.2011; Interview with CDC secretary #27: 30.09.2011.

³⁴⁵ Email communication with NSP Office at MRRD, Kabul, 28.12.2013; Interview with the new CDC Chief #23, 01.10.2011.

³⁴⁶ This will be further elaborated on in the following sub-section on NSP's women conditionality.

³⁴⁷ Interview with ex-Chief CDC K&A #16, 23.08.2011.

the NSP requirements. As in Nangarhar's case, the second election in 2012 for the CDC did not go as smoothly as the first. Once villagers had seen how the CDC could bring resources into their communities and increase their own authority, anyone with ambition nominated him or herself for the next round of elections.

In the end, there were four candidates for the leadership. Residents of Akhundun wanted a man from their village to replace Haji S. who had resigned after returning from a pilgrimage. Haji S.'s resignation was not widely known, but in his absence, another member of CDC (from Katakana) became acting chief until the second round election was convened. Haji S. explained the reason for his resignation: "After I returned from Zyarat and Haj (pilgrimage) I did not want to get involved in things that made me vulnerable to committing a sin by not doing justice in distributing things that arrive in the village. I wanted to leave the CDC leadership".³⁴⁸

None of the informants in the two villages spoke openly about any issue of corruption or unfair distribution of NSP resources, although UN-Habitat reported that once some villagers approached with a complaint about the CDC chief, but were told to resolve it among themselves.³⁴⁹ Haji S.'s decision to leave the CDC was not entirely clear and it would seem that he had ambitions beyond the local politics of the CDC in K&A. He was actively involved in the social council,³⁵⁰ which had been registered separately as the 'Katakana Social Council' at the Ministry of Justice³⁵¹ and supervised the *madrassa*. And, by placing a new person of his choice as the new CDC chief, he would ensure that the leadership of CDC remained under his influence despite his formal absence.

In accordance with NSP regulations a second round of elections for CDC membership and the CDC chief positions were held in the community. But the narrative shared by Haji S. informs us that once again pre-election negotiations within the villages had already decided the outcome:

One Friday, as our prayers were over, I pulled Sayyed D.'s hand and made him touch the holy flag swearing that he would take the CDC chief position and would perform honestly and not commit any sin or injustices in his job. He agreed to become chief of the CDC.³⁵²

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ Interview with Yakwalnag UNH official #15, 22.08.2011.

³⁵⁰ See section 7.4.1. of this chapter for more on the social council in Yakawlang.

³⁵¹ The 'Social Council of Katakana' is registered with the Ministry of Justice under the 'social organisations' category under the name of Sayyed Abdul Ahmad <http://moj.gov.af/Content/files/SocialOrgs.pdf> (accessed 25.08.2013).

³⁵² Interview with ex-CDC chief of K&A #16, 23.08.2011.

Another informant from Akhundun pointed out that there were four candidates for the same post, but the winner, Sayyed D., won simply because “he [Sayyed D.] had the support of Haji S.”³⁵³

This, and earlier examples of how villagers ‘elected’ or agreed on CDC leadership, demonstrates how a new actor who did not necessarily have an elite or leadership background used the CDC privileges to legitimise his role and emerge as one of the key patrons for the villages. The example of his support for the second CDC chief and possibly the appointment of the *qaryadar* for Katakhanah (said to be subject to his approval) demonstrates he has emerged as an elite, maintaining his power and influence over the village governance relations as a whole. More importantly, it also informs us that there is a performative and theatrical element in this overall process of institution building in the two villages. The theatrical element is related to the discursive landscape that has been used by elites such as Haji S. in order to strengthen his position in leading everyday practices of local governance.

In sum, although the two villages succeeded in forming a CDC and securing the block-grants, they maintained their existing power structures under the old settlement of the individual villages. The CDC structure allowed local or village level patrons or elites to gain more power and influence, however, as a modern form of governance institution at the village level, it did not entirely replace the existing power structures.

7.3.4. Women’s role in local governance and donor conditionality



Figure 11: Women’s Committee session
Participants are women from Akhundun and Katakhanah, session led by deputy CDC chief ©
Photo by author.

The socio-cultural fabric of Afghan society is structured by patriarchy which involves the systematic subordination of women (Kakar 1979:172-173; Barakat and Wardell

³⁵³ Interview with CDC member from Akhundun #25, 30.09.2011.

2002:920; Ahmed-Ghosh 2003; Kandiyoti 2007a; Kabeer et al. 2011). As discussed in chapter two, patrimonialism and patriarchy are inter-linked and mutually supporting of each another. Men are considered superior to women who are perceived as inferior subjects that should obey the rules set for them (Charrad 2011:51-53). In Afghanistan too, this mind-set dominates men's and women's views on women's roles and responsibilities, although it should be noted that the years of war have also resulted in exposing women and men from rural Afghanistan to urban life, education and different mind-sets. Here, I explore further how women in the K&A context entered the public domain as 'elected' representatives of their communities.

As pointed out in chapter five, among the different actors involved in the NSP formulation process, the facilitating partners were the ones most concerned with the gender conditionality of the NSP, arguing that it would not work in practice due to the conservative practices of Afghan society. Azarbaijani-Mughaddam (2010) notes that statements such as 'our women are uneducated', 'we cannot change our culture', 'our people are not ready' were amongst the most common phrases heard in conversation with NSP and FP staff when questions around women's participation in local decision-making were raised (Azarbaijani-Mughaddam 2010:47). This concern was also shared by some of the senior FP leaders such as the current provincial head of UN-Habitat who used to be directly involved in the NSP facilitation at the provincial level. However, he came to change his mind;

This is perhaps the first time in history that there is an opportunity for women at village level to play a role that is formally recognised and required by the government. We thought that this would not work, but in fact, it did work. (...) We thought, women will not take part actively, they will not express their views, but we were completely wrong. I personally find women in most of our Hazara communities in the central highlands very active in this regard. In fact, in some cases women have played an even more active role than men!³⁵⁴

It is true that the NSP's conditionality on women's participation (as CDC members and reserving a position for women as deputy chief of CDC) was not openly confronted by local residents in Katakhana and Akhundun. However, the role of women was seen by most of the informants as symbolic and not significant.³⁵⁵ This resonates with other

³⁵⁴ Interview with Provincial Manager of UN-H in Bamyan #111, 29.05.2012.

³⁵⁵ Interview with *mullah* of Akhundun #104 26.05.2012. Interview with PC Member from Yakawlang #99, 24.05.2012. Interview with ex-CDC chief in K&A #16, 23.08.2011.

findings; Beath et al. (2013) for example, in their nationwide survey of the programme suggest that women's role in local decision-making is still limited (Beath et al. 2013).

The social mobilisers, both male and female, introduced NSP's conditionality at the early community mobilisation stage in 2003/4. The key factor that determined local residents' responses to the conditionality in K&A was their degree of need for development assistance after years of poverty, drought, war and human losses that resulted in a lack of fundamental facilities. Additionally, the presence or absence of strong or radical religious actors opposing women's public role could also play an important part in whether communities said yes or no to this demand from the centre.³⁵⁶ More generally, women in Shiia communities often have more possibilities to gather on different occasions for prayers and other religious ceremonies at *hussainias* (large halls where they go to listen to religious discussions and preaching). In K&A such possibilities of socialising in public spaces gave women the opportunity to participate in meetings with men (although separated by a curtain or wall), unlike in Nangarhar where socio-religious interactions between men and women were almost totally absent.

In an earlier section (7.3.3), I discussed how the NSP conditionality to reserve the deputy chief position for women led the residents of K&A villages to select N. for the position. Here, I find it necessary to look at her background in order to understand what made her the best choice for this position.

N. is her late 50s and a native of Akhundun. She is the most well-known female in the two villages. A mother of five, her eldest son is a teacher, married with children. Her youngest daughter, in her early 20s, is divorced and she and her young son live with her mother.



Figure 12: The Deputy chief of CDC for Katakhan and Akhundun

She is illiterate, but takes her notebook and pen to meetings and with the help of others notes important points. ©Photo by author

³⁵⁶ The person in-charge of the NSP in Bamyan city, shared an example from another district in Bamyan where a number of villages for a long period refused the NSP simply because of the women's inclusion conditionality. It took them years to revise their position. Interview with the provincial head of NSP #6, 17.08.2011.

N. is illiterate but she has a mobile phone, a pen and notebook with important telephone numbers and her own way of finding people's phone numbers and using her notebook. N. and her family also directly experienced the severe effects of war during the past three decades. Family members were killed during Soviet bombardments, an event that pushed her family to migrate, first to Pakistan and then Iran. In the mid-1990s, her family returned to Afghanistan, but the worst was still to come. Akhundun was one of the communities worst affected by the Taliban massacre in the winter of 2000. N., her husband ill in bed (he later died), became an active member of the community, conducting funerals and burial ceremonies for the victims of massacre. Although N.'s position came about as a result of a broader strategy agreed by the village elders, she has been able to influence local governance relations through her role as the deputy chief of the CDC. She became a member of the DDA at district level and was also able to control (to some extent) the distribution of different donor resources, especially those focused on women.³⁵⁷ At the same time, as this example demonstrates, women's inclusion was negotiated and agreed within the framework of a patriarchal mind-set among the village elites. Hussani's age and her position as a widow were important factors in making her an acceptable choice for the leadership position (Kakar 1979:172-173; Kabeer et al. 2011; Mielke 2013:19): older women have less reproductive responsibilities and obligations such as taking care of household work and child bearing which allows them to take part in public activities more so than younger women with children.

The other female CDC member, L., joined the K&A CDC in the second elections. In her late 30s, she was a university graduate and religious studies teacher who had recently returned from Iran. In her case, her position as a local teacher helped her become a member of CDC. As a native of Katakhana, however, she was precluded from winning the majority vote because of the broader pre-election consensus already made by the village elites to select a woman from Akhundun.

Both women in the CDC leadership were unable to secure women-specific projects through the NSP block-grant. In L.'s view, the 'weakness' of women in the CDC or in the village was not the only reason. She also suggested that the way in which SMs arranged the process resulted in the failure of the women to secure any of their prioritised projects:

³⁵⁷ Interview with female CDC member who worked as a clerk #17, 23.08.2011; Interview with female CDC chief #24, 30.09.2011.

(...) We [women] all agreed to go for electricity as need number one. Women also highlighted other needs. For example, literacy, chicken farms, tailoring, carpet weaving, bakery, etc. But as the female SMs were very weak, they failed to help us make strong proposals. We gathered all of the suggestions and presented them to Haji S. who was CDC chief. Then they were presented to UN-Habitat, who were in charge of decision-making for accepting or rejecting a proposal and because our proposals were not written well, they were all rejected.³⁵⁸

N. agreed with her colleague, adding that the women's share was spent on the riverside wall.³⁵⁹ According to the new CDC chief, however, the reason the women's requests were denied was because "women do not have the ability to implement projects by themselves".³⁶⁰ He also confirmed it was the CDC leadership's decision to use the part of the block-grant allocated for women-focused projects for another project. It is possible, although there is no evidence either way, to note that as the gabion wall was more beneficial to Akhundand residents, N., representing the interests of her village as a whole, might not have objected to this if the men in her constituency wanted the riverside wall to be built. Nonetheless, the question remains why did none of the women's projects make it to the final stage of approval? As different accounts demonstrated, there were two factors involved: First, the CDC leadership preferred Akhundand's suggestion for a gabion wall over the suggested women's projects. Secondly, the female SM's limited skills in terms of turning priorities into 'good projects' may also have been a reason. Consequently, what can be concluded is that although men in K&A did not object to women's inclusion in the CDC, they were reluctant to agree to their substantive demands; instead choosing priorities identified by men. There were two factors involved in this: other village priorities by men were given higher importance than women's priorities and secondly, the social mobilisers were not well-equipped to articulate women's priorities into justifiable proposals technically, hence, this has become another reason why women did not succeed in benefiting directly from the NSP block-grants allocated for K&A.

In sum, this section discussed how the NSP intervention's conditionality on women's inclusion was negotiated and materialised in Katakhana and Akhundand. I demonstrated that the NSP intervention played a role in formalising women's position in local leadership in this particular case. While it is evident that their role to some extent

³⁵⁸ Interview with secretary of the female CDC K&A #17 23.08.2011.

³⁵⁹ Interview with female CDC chief #24, 30.09.2011.

³⁶⁰ Interview with the new CDC Chief #23, 01.10.2011.

remained symbolic, it nonetheless opened up space for local women leaders to play a gatekeeper role in the distribution of some resources. Finally, the way the male elites were able to prioritise their own preference (the gabion wall) over the women's projects, was a reminder of the patriarchal relations that still inform the way local actors view women.

7.3.5. *Intended goals and unintended outcomes*

In this part, I provide an analysis of various interpretations of the NSP intervention and how the local structures created through the NSP (i.e., the CDCs) are seen by different actors at the village level and beyond.

The local recipients or subjects' interpretation of the NSP intervention was directly linked to the way the programme was introduced to them by the social mobilisers who represented the facilitating partners.³⁶¹ They did not articulate the political and social engineering goals of the project, instead focusing on its developmental and technical dimensions. Thus, at different levels, with different actors, the programme used different justificatory stories and narratives. For instance, in discussions with donors, the MRRD leadership emphasised the social engineering and institution-building aspects, while at local sites they highlighted its economic and social benefits.

The evaluation of the NSP's first phase had recommended that its political goals should be 'overtly' transmitted to people in order to assure its sustainability.³⁶² However, this was not shown to be the case in the follow up for the second and third phases, at least in the context of K&A CDC. Moreover, according to members of the K&A CDC, the NSP II experience was not very well received by the local population due to fewer meetings with FPs and, perhaps, because it did not deliver any significant projects in this phase.³⁶³ In other words, it is arguable that neither the political goal of the NSP nor its governing role was transmitted openly to the local population – who thus saw the intervention solely as a form of service delivery to their communities (Ferguson 1994; Monsutti 2012:586). Also, people's understanding of a service delivery project is that it lasts only for the duration of a project cycle. As discussed earlier in this section, the

³⁶¹ In section 7.4.1. I provided an example in which the SMs' explanation of the programme was confusing for the villagers in the first place.

³⁶² "The political objectives of the NSP (e.g. the establishment of CDCs within the formal system of local governance) need to be expressed more overtly within the Programme objectives" (Mid-Term Evaluation of NSP in Afghanistan 2006:22).

³⁶³ Several members of the CDC decided to withdraw from membership, either because they found it ineffective or they were upset with the new CDC chief who did things according to his own wish without consulting with the rest of the CDC members (interview with female CDC member worked as clerk #17, 23.08.2011; Interview with ex-CDC male member who was also secretary, Katakana #27, 30.09.11).

local elites' attitude towards the CDC was to keep it 'half alive' by occasionally meeting when the FPs visited the village in order to ensure that channels for future resources remained open. But the CDC never fulfilled its active role in terms of operating as an elected local governance structure in Katakhan and Akhund.

Different village level actors; CDC and non-CDC members, youth and elderly, male and female, educated and illiterate, as well as religious actors, agreed that the NSP was a means to help them improve their economic life conditions. The aim of the NSP, in their view, was to help people stand on their own two feet by providing them with support. It was to bring people together after decades of war and hostility, helping them through public infrastructure resources such as roads, riverside walls, electricity, schools, clinics, etc.³⁶⁴

The intended and unintended effects of the NSP at the local level could be seen in different ways. For instance, the NSP's aim "to build, strengthen, and maintain Community Development Councils (CDCs) as effective institutions for local governance and social-economic development" (MRRD 2012:11) was only partially achieved by the K&A CDC. Local people perceived the NSP through its projects; the absence of such projects was seen as the end of the CDC and therefore, the NSP intervention. However, the programme nonetheless did create a few leaders and powerbrokers, including for the first time, a female as gatekeeper for, at least, partial distribution of resources that came through NGOs for women-focused projects. Although very limited and challenged, the push for women's presence in the CDC and in its leadership was an important shift from no women's representation at the public decision-making level to the emergence of women within the village and beyond it as community leaders and public actors. Although the NSP goal to see the CDCs as local governance 'institutions' was not achieved, the local population's understanding of the programme as a mechanism to bring people together could be seen as a contribution to part of the NSP's political goals.

³⁶⁴ Based on interviews with male and female residents of Yakawlang district, Katakhan and Akhund villages #23; #24; #25; #27; #47; #100; #111 conducted during the field research period at the province, district and village levels 2011-2012.

7.4. District governance under patrimonial system of rule

7.4.1. Yakawlang district: A site for contested interventions



Figure 13: A view of Nayak Market, Central Yakawlang
©Photo by Author

Yakawlang is considered an important district in Bamyan Province.³⁶⁵ The district is categorised as a first grade [*daraja awal*] district by IDLG³⁶⁶ and is a fertile area for crop cultivation and animal husbandry and includes nomadic livestock summer feeding grounds. Hence, the notion of village in the context of Yakawlang (like many parts of Hazarajat region) is understood in two ways: *qishlaq* or *qarya*, the villages where families are permanently based and *ailaq* where some members of the family (mostly elderly) temporarily graze their livestock. The Yakawlang population was estimated at 83,000 by the Central Statistics Office (CSO), with an estimated 23,333 families (CSO 2012). The population includes Hazaras, Sadaats/Sayyeds and small numbers of Tajiks. There are 363 villages represented by 143 CDCs.³⁶⁷ The district is divided into four parts.³⁶⁸ Kot-e-Sadat, the central district, includes the national park (Band-e-Amir),

³⁶⁵ This relates to its geo-political location (bordering the northern provinces) and also its tourist potential. Band-e-Amir, Qala-e-Barbar and Chehl Borj are part of the historical heritage for Afghanistan. The Band-e-Amir Lake area was recently named as Afghanistan's first national park.

³⁶⁶ According to the Local Administration Law, the provinces and districts are divided into grades 1, 2 and 3 based on population, size, number of districts, distance from other provinces, municipality and capacity to generate revenues (Nijat 2014: 16). Interview with Governor Sarabi #11, 20.08.2011.

³⁶⁷ According to the district governor, this was the number of villages registered in the CSO in 2009. Interview with district governor of Yakawlang Muhammad Naser Fayaz #13, 22.08.2012; Interview with UN-Habitat Social Mobilisers #15, 22.08.2011.

³⁶⁸ Kot-e-Sadaat (centre), Kot-e-Qamyaba (north-west); Kot-e-Takana (west); and Siah Dara (south). The first three areas are mainly where sayyeds live, whereas in Siah Dara, Hazaras are in the majority although some sayyed families are also present (Solidarites 2002:3).

the Yakawlang-Bamyan city road, the main market district *Nayak*, and the district headquarters.³⁶⁹

Yakawlang operated as an important hub for the Hazarajat leaders, especially during the years of war and conflict. Although there were few linkages with the central government for most of the 1980s and 1990s, the district institutions operated as usual under the leadership of Shura-e-Etifaq in the earlier war years and later under different factions who led the area. After the establishment of Hezb-e-Wahdat in 1989, the district came under the direct leadership of the party. The people in the district experienced several military offensives, including the Taliban offensive in the winter of 2000/1 in which hundreds of people were massacred.

The political leadership of Yakawlang during the time of this research was shared among different Hazara and Sayyed influential elites who had been involved in Hazara politics at local and national levels over the past decade.³⁷⁰ There were three main competing factions active in the district: the Alyar brothers, sons of Alyar, an important figure previously part of *Sazman-e-Nasr* who operated as 'minister of defence' in the *Hezb-e-Wahdat* for a long time;³⁷¹ the Elkhani, who used to be part of the pre-war traditional leadership of *mirs* for the whole of Yakawlang, the most important of which are Ghulam Ali Wahdat who was Deputy Minister of Interior during 2010-2013 and, since October 2013, governor of Bamyan. Safora Elkhani, his sister, is an MP³⁷² and the Sayyeds of Yakawlang, mainly led by influential traditional religious networks and intellectual figures such as the Hussaini brothers.³⁷³ The district governor was

³⁶⁹ The district headquarters has representatives of all of different ministries. Interview with district governor of Yakawlang Muhammad Naser Fayaz #13, 22.08.2012.

³⁷⁰ Interview with a Yakawlang resident #14, 20.08.2011. Interview with ex-CDC chief #16, 23.08.2011. Interview with Kabul based aid-worker active in Hazarajat #135, 10.11.2012.

³⁷¹ The Alyar family were close allies of Karim Khalili and remained very active in Yakawlang politics for a long time. They are Hazara and in the past were affiliated with *Nasr*, one of the Islamist groups supported by Iran. *Nasr* later merged with *Sepah* and other groups to form *Hezb-e-Wahdat*.

³⁷² Ghulam Ali Wahdat's father was a khan from the well-known Elkhani family in Yakawlang who was a Khan for the whole of Yakawlang. He himself was affiliated with the Khalqi government and later joined Hezb-e-Wahdat. In recent years he has worked in different senior positions for Ministry of Interior.

³⁷³ The Hussaini brothers: Sayyed Sarwar Hussaini who served as Deputy Minister for the Ministry of Education during 2008-2012. He is also the chairperson of the CCA office (Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan). His brother, Haji Mohammad Jawad Safwat who lives in Yakawlang's Dara-e-Ali is involved with the Shura-e-Ejtemayee or social councils that are active across the district.

It has to be noted that among the sayyeds there are more than family who are influential in the district. But in this part, I see their relation to broader patronage networks beyond Bamyan as an indicator.

Mohammad Nasir Fayaz, a Hazara from the Waras district and previously³⁷⁴ a member of *Nasr*, an Iranian supported militant group loyal to Karim Khalili. Fayaz had been district governor for the past four years and had been recently dismissed for a short while due to local residents' accusations of land grabbing and distributing key posts in the new township of Yakawlang amongst his network alliances.³⁷⁵ During 2012 rumours circulated that the Bamyán governor was going to dismiss him; according to local Yakawlang residents, he went to Kabul and 're-confirmed' his position as district governor with support from Karim Khalili. The national media outlets reported that the deputy governor of Bamyán was about to introduce a new district governor, when Fayaz returned from Kabul with a letter that extended his governorship for another three years (*ibid.*).



Figure 14: Opening ceremony of a new township in Yakawlang (October 12, 2012) Hassan Abdullahi (second on left) Minister of Urban Development (an ex-Hezb-e-Wahdat member), Second Vice-President Karim Khalili (centre) and Habiba Sarabi, Governor of Bamyán mark the launch of the new township. © Picture courtesy of @pajhwok

According to local residents, there were different councils (*shuras*) in the district, including *Shora-e-Adalat* led by Karim Khalili loyalists and *Shora-e-Refah* led by Haji Mohammad Muhaqiq supporters. The Ulema Council or *Shora-e-Ulema*, nominally a religious council, is based in Yakawlang, but it is perceived to be under the influence of

³⁷⁴ *Nasr* was set up among Hazaras in Iran, and adhered to strict Khomeinism according to Harpviken (1996); it operated actively during the 1980s civil war in Hazarajat. Some *Nasr* members in particular were known for being radical in terms of targeting the traditional leaders in Hazarajat (Harpviken 1996:59, 73; Ibrahimi 2009).

³⁷⁵ According to local residents there were rumours of his being dismissed, but some news channels reported as fact the introduction of a new district governor after the demonstration. Pajhowknews 08.02.2012 <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/node/169528> (accessed on 04.02.2013)

these two groups, hence local clergies and ordinary people do not see the Ulema Council as a non-political or impartial actor.³⁷⁶

It should be noted that the concept of *shura* (as in all of Afghanistan) has been used by people in Yakawlang and Bamyan in different ways.³⁷⁷ In the recent past, the term *shura* primarily denoted structures created by military factions, but in the post-2001 context, the NSP's CDCs, also known as *Shura-e-Enkishafi Qarya* (Village Development Councils), brought about a new understanding of *shura*. A senior UN-Habitat staff member in Bamyan who used to be a war commander explained the difference between 'old' and 'new' *shuras*.³⁷⁸

The old *shuras* were only *shura* by name and did not follow Islamic principles; they were led by war commanders, decisions were unilateral, the leadership was selective and the chief commander's order was law. Whereas the new *shura* is closer to the Islamic principle of how it has to be. Members are elected, they consult and decide by majority votes, there is no outsider; a person from the village gets elected and they consult with the people on major issues, there is more consultation and less authoritarian form of rule in our new *shuras* [He refers to the CDCs].³⁷⁹

This informant had been one of the leading actors in the implementation of the NSP from the early days, so in part, his analysis and comparison reflects how his own understanding of, and approach to, the *shura* as an institution has changed. An important aspect of his statement highlights the power relations underlying the 'new' and 'old' *shura*. In the old *shuras*, the commander was king and no one could challenge his position; however, in the 'new' *shuras*, the power is somewhat divided among different members of the council, although as evidence shows, the village elites and most powerful men still control the 'new' village *shuras*. Nonetheless, the post-NSP intervention context shows us that the village leadership is no longer monopolised by one man and that access to leadership is more open than in the past. However it has to be noted that the NSP intervention is only one of many broader factors that led to such openness.

³⁷⁶ Interview with a Yakawlang resident #14, 20.08.2011. Interview with ex-CDC chief #16, 23.08.2011. Interview with Kabul based aid-worker active in Hazarajat #135, 10.11.2012.

³⁷⁷ See **chapter four**, 4.4. for further elaboration on different forms of *shuras* created during the years of war at the national level.

³⁷⁸ *Shura* is originally an Arabic term and it means consultation. See **chapter four** (4.3.1.) for further elaborations on the concept of *shura* in the village context.

³⁷⁹ Interview with UN-Habitat official, Bamyan, #111, 29.05.2012

Yakawlang as a site of multiple interventions

Central Yakawlang houses two high schools and a large *madrassa* located close to the bazaar. There are two additional *madrasas* (religious schools) in or close to the district centre. The older *madrassa*, *Madrassa-e-Emam-e-Sadiq*, was established in 1976 and is in the southern part of Akhundun.³⁸⁰ The newer one was built by *Sazman-e-Nasr* led by Karim Khalili in 1989 and is currently led by Mohammadi, the district governor prior to Taliban rule.³⁸¹ The *madrassa* in Akhundun is apparently under influence of the sayyed community³⁸² and what is considered among the locals as the 'traditional religious networks' while the one built through *Sazman-e-Nasr* (previously led by Karim Khalili) is seen as a political form of representation of the interests of Shiia Islamists.³⁸³ Ironically, the *madrasas* are located less than half a kilometre from each other. This could be seen as a sign that the competing patronage networks of the war time, still maintain their influence and control over the sources of power.

The secular public schools in central Yakawlang are supported by the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), NGOs and some government funding (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2013). While religious networks also operate in a similar manner by having their own sources of support, mostly linked to the religious hierarchy that leads to either Qum (Iran) or Najaf and Karbala (Iraq), depending on which *imam* the local residents follow. The presence of these different institutions in central Yakawlang is illustrative of the different and sometimes competing forms of external influence and funding. Institution building and education are a strong focus of western funding through the PRT, NGOs and government channels.³⁸⁴ Religious

³⁸⁰ This *madrassa* was built by Ayatullah Sadiqi who was a senior clergyman (*Hujat-ul-Islam*) from Akhundun. He was educated in Najaf (Iraq) and was an avid follower of Imam Khomeini prior to the Iranian revolution. He died in 2002. Politically, Ayatullah Sadiqi was not part of the *Wahdat* or other Hazara or sayyed parties and only supported the *Shura-e-Etefaq* that ruled Hazarajat briefly in 1980s. A new Grand Mosque in Akhundun was built and named after him in 2005. See more on this point in the following sub-section.

³⁸¹ According to local informants, the land this *madrassa* was built on is owned by a family from Qarya-e-Shatughan and was taken by force from its owners. The owners recently took the case to court and were successful, but due to interference from Khalili (the vice president) and his followers they are still unable to reclaim their land. (Interview with Yakawlang resident #21, 20.08.2011; Interview with local informant #95, 23.05.2012.)

³⁸² I was unable to track the most accurate financial source for building this *madrassa* and Grand Mosque in 2005. However, according to an online source (Aqayee 2012) the rebuilding of the Grand Mosque and *madrassa* was financed through Ayatullah Sadiqi's supporters network (Aqayee 2012).

³⁸³ Harpviken (1996-vi-vii) introduces the traditional clergy and the formally trained clergy who are represented as sayyeds and shakhs in the context of Yakawlang. The two *madrasas* in Yakawlang respectively represents institutions for the two.

³⁸⁴ In addition to 58 schools (including primary, secondary and high schools), around 85% of the district's population have access to health services; there are 6 agricultural cooperatives, 2 farmers' unions and 4 veterinary clinics. 12% of the district has access to electricity. Most of these services are provided by the government through international funding (NABDP 2010).

institutions, on the other hand, continue to supply local religious-political networks with support to build *madrasas* and mosques. Local patronage networks ally themselves with these different intervening forces in order to secure benefits from both.

The whole of Yakawlang District is covered by the NSP³⁸⁵ with UN-Habitat (UNH) as the main facilitating partner. The first two phases of the NSP programme had been completed for all the CDCs in the district by 2010. In the first phase 72 CDCs were formed in the district, all with the required male and female members.³⁸⁶ Although CDCs are mainly concerned with their own village development, they sometimes take part in cluster-led projects identified through the District Development Assemblies (DDAs) that benefit more than one village in an area. In the case of Yakawlang, for example, five CDCs in the centre (including the K&A CDC) joined together to work on the hydropower source project.³⁸⁷ The project cost US \$300,000 according to local informants and provides electricity for most of the five villages in the district central area. According to FPs and local residents, this is one of the most successful projects in the district.³⁸⁸

In Yakawlang, the IDLG provided support in terms of infrastructure (renovation of the district headquarters), training the district civil servants in public administration and working with the district office on enhancing its administration systems of reporting, management etc. (NABDP 2013). At the IDLG's request, a sub-directorate of village affairs was established in 2010.³⁸⁹

The procedure that the provincial governor had followed to dismiss the district governor was in line with the IDLG's stance on the Civil Service Reform process which aims to appoint district governors through a bureaucratic procedure known as Capacity Building for Reform (Nijat 2014). However, as Nijat points out, since the overall rentier nature of the current state is based on patrimonial relations, this 'reform' procedure of the IDLG has also been turned into a mechanism of privilege that is controlled by powerful patrons at the centre (*ibid.*:48). Khalili's intervention as vice-president to block the dismissal of the district governor could be seen as evidence of how the patrimonial

³⁸⁵ According to the NSP Office at MRRD (Kabul) Yakawlang is fully covered and 144 CDCs are contracted to receive a second round of block-grants. Email communication with NSP Office at MRRD, Kabul, 28.12.2013

³⁸⁶ Although the Social Mobilisers claimed that the CDCs were mixed, when speaking to people in the villages, it appeared that in fact separate women's committees had been set up for the first two phases. Interview with local CDC member in K&A #17, 23.08.2011.

³⁸⁷ Interview with ex- CDC leader of Katakhan & Akhund #16, 23.08.2011.

³⁸⁸ Interview with local resident of Katakhan #28, 30.09.2011; interview with teacher in Bedmushki #37, 02.10.2011. Interview with elder in Akhund #29, 29.09.2011.

³⁸⁹ Interview with district governor of Yakawlang Muhammad Naser Fayaz #13, 22.08.2012.

system of rule is still more powerful than the promotion of 'good governance' and merit-based appointments. One complaint among local sayyeds about the district governor was that he still played 'party politics' by using his old networks.³⁹⁰

In sum, Yakawlang District presents a site of contested interventions that has both an internal dynamic with locally competing factions and groups with divergent agendas trying to reach positions of power and authority, as well as outside interventions by competing forces that are internationally funded and channelled through either the government's formal institutions (such as the IDLG and MRRD) or patronage based political elite networks that have been influential in the region historically – although there is an overlap between the two that has to be considered. This overlap may explain why the neopatrimonial system of rule dominates governance relations in a district where public offices and positions of power are occupied by people through informal patronage networks.

7.4.2. Competing forms of central government interventions

In this section I present two specific governance interventions at district level in Yakawlang, one by the MRRD and one by the IDLG to a) show how interventions reflect the competition between the two institutions at national level over the ownership of governance relations and b) to unpack how, in Yakawlang, locals have maintained control over the resources that come through these interventions. The first example is the MRRD's National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) that focused on establishing district development assemblies or DDAs.³⁹¹ The DDAs operate in a similar way to the CDCs but at district level. The second example is the IDLG's attempt to revive the sub-directorate of village affairs and start the process of registering 'village administrators' or *qaryadars*.

As Yakawlang was not categorised as an 'insecure district', it was excluded from USAID's ASOP coverage,³⁹² therefore the IDLG had a limited role in service provision and disbursement of financial support. The district had a new building which contained offices for the district court and other administrative institutions. The sub-department of Village Affairs is mainly concerned with registering *qaryadars* who, according to a letter and ToR set by the IDLG, act as 'village administrators'.³⁹³ *Qaryadars*, previously known as *mehtars*, were traditionally appointed by government representatives

³⁹⁰ Interview with a local resident from Yakawlang #14, 20.08.2011; Interview with a local resident in Nayak Bazaar #37, 02.10.2011.

³⁹¹ For introduction of NABDP, refer to **chapter five** 5.2.1.

³⁹² For further details about ASOPs refer to **chapter five**, 5.3.3. and **chapter six**, 6.4.2.

³⁹³ Interview with the sub-director of village affairs, Yakawlang #18, 24.08.2011

(Monsutti 2005:91). In the present context, however, every village was asked by this department to introduce a representative to the district.³⁹⁴ According to one informant it was very unclear what the government's goal for having an '*arbab*' for each village was:

I heard they want to bring back an *arbab* for each village. They call it *qaryadar*. This is too much and it will go out of control as the district government is not strong enough to manage over 300 *arbabs*. The question is, how will he [the district governor] manage to oversee 300 people if they face problems?³⁹⁵

In this informant's view, it would be far better having fewer representatives for each of the four parts of the district: "We have 4 regions in Yakawlang and ideally having 10 representatives from each should be enough rather than having over 300 *qaryadars*, which is surely going to create huge chaos".³⁹⁶ The officer in charge of the procedures at the district headquarters elaborated on how they proceeded with the selection of *qaryadars*:

There is no written rule on how a *qaryadar* should be appointed by the IDLG but we are asked to find out who is most influential in the village. The way to monitor this is by asking the candidate to bring a *waseeqa* [a legal document] that states the person has volunteered to become the *qaryadar* and that paper is signed by different village leaders.³⁹⁷

According to the sub-director of village affairs in the district, the position of *qaryadar* is open to all with no specific requirements.³⁹⁸ The *qaryadar*'s responsibility is similar to the *arbab*'s role in the past and according to a policy paper by the IDLG is to "formalise and improve" these old systems (IDLG 2012:20-21). Yet, for the local communities, having both a *qaryadar* and an elected village chief like the head of the CDC, became confusing:

As a *qaryadar*, I have solved a number of issues within the village with the help of the sub-directorate of village affairs. We avoided making it official. (...) In terms of assistance, the NGOs can all get our help in providing them with lists of people and introducing the needy families in the village. (...) I am so far not officially working. But if there is any problem in the village, I try to solve it. I keep the *Moder e Qaryajat* [sub-director of village affairs at district headquarters] informed

³⁹⁴ Interview with the sub-director of village affairs, #18, 24.08.2011

³⁹⁵ Interview with the ex-CDC Chief from Katakana, #16, 23.08.2011

³⁹⁶ Interview with the ex-CDC Chief from Katakana, #16, 23.08.2011

³⁹⁷ Interview with the sub-director of village affairs, #18, 24.08.2011

³⁹⁸ Interview with the sub-director of village affairs, #18, 24.08.2011

about issues and we find solution for problems. I provide a monthly report to the sub-directorate. (...) So far I do not have any salary, but this has been promised.³⁹⁹

The role of the CDC chief is also to solve problems and to help facilitate NGOs' work in the village. However, the roles differ in relation to the mechanism for reporting to district headquarters. There is no written rule that the chief of the CDC has such an obligation, but *qaryadars* are obliged to 'keep the *Moder-e-Qaryajat* informed' about events in the village. More importantly, CDC leadership and membership was entirely voluntary, but the government for the *qaryadar* position promised a salary. Hence, as seen in the descriptions of the *qaryadar*, this post created a new gate-keeper in the village who was more closely under the surveillance of the district headquarters. Since the establishment of CDCs it has been common practice that all NGOs and other institutions working in the villages relied on the CDC leadership to get access to the village; this was particularly so in Bamyan. However, when the *qaryadar* talked about providing "lists of needy families to NGOs", or "solving the problems" of people, this meant a direct confrontation with the CDC leadership who were already acting as gatekeepers. Another aspect of this new 'system' as referred to by the IDLG, is that it could be seen as an expression of direct IDLG interest in having control over local village level affairs, for example through the monthly report mechanisms or by seeking the help of the sub-director of village affairs with daily conflict related matters.⁴⁰⁰ Given that there are no hard and fast qualifications for appointment, some *qaryadars* claim they were elected while others merely satisfied the local district officials by presenting the 'volunteer' legal document.⁴⁰¹

The MRRD, in comparison to the IDLG has a stronger operational presence in the district. The MRRD's provincial directorate, with the help of UNDP, has worked to form the District Development Assembly (DDA). They comprise representatives from all CDCs in Yakawlang District. The DDA in Yakawlang was established in November 2006 and is still functioning (NABDP 2010).

The DDA formation process is conducted by staff from the MRRD's National Area Based Development Programme (NABDP) who facilitate the elections and project

³⁹⁹ Interview with *qaryadar* of Katakhanah #32, 02.10.2011.

⁴⁰⁰ Monthly reports are required by the sub-directorate of village affairs on events happening in the village that includes list of population, births, deaths, security incidents and so on. Interview with the sub-director of village affairs, #18, 24.08.2011

⁴⁰¹ The *qaryadar* of Katakhanah claimed that he was 'elected' by his fellow villagers from among three other candidates, but this was not confirmed by other villagers. It is possible that a smaller group of village elders selected him. Interview observation #32, 02.10.2011.

management. The Yakawlang DDA has 30 members and so far has had two rounds of elections, one in 2006 when the DDA started its work and a second in June 2010. The process of DDA establishment was explained by a member as follows:

All CDC chiefs (143 persons) across Yakawlang are called to come together at the district main hall. They were brought together and the DDA's goals and objectives were explained to them. The CDC chiefs (and female deputies) were divided into 15 clusters and each cluster included 10 villages. Once they had elected one representative from each cluster, that representative became a member of the DDA. He or she was then responsible for bringing the concerns of all those CDC chiefs he represents to the rest of the district assembly. After this, the cluster heads gather and choose the DDA chief, deputy, secretary and treasurer from among the members. The chief of DDA in Yakawlang is Haji Mohammad Payam Alyarzada, the son of late Haji Alyar, a senior commander of *Hezb-e-Wahdat*.⁴⁰²

The leadership of the DDA is an important post at district level in terms of attracting and distributing resources for the whole district. The importance of this role goes back to the question of distribution of resources and how district needs and priorities are decided.⁴⁰³ The district assemblies produced the district development plan, a key document referred to and used by most of the interested donors and organisations in the district.⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, being able to influence and lead the DDAs can be seen as an indicator for how these new forms of institutions or mechanisms for distribution of resources, are controlled by de facto district elites who are linked with the pre-2001 politico-military groups in different ways.

To conclude, in Yakawlang District local elites competed within the district to gain access to resources and to build relationships with the new post-2001 political regime. The lines between the political, the social and the developmental were blurred and an actor with a strong background in one of these fields could be easily become an actor using resources from another. Informal politico-military actors of the past still

⁴⁰² Interview with DDA member in Yakawlang #26, 02.10.2011.

⁴⁰³ The DDA clusters are tasked to first bring in list of needs from all different parts of the district and then prioritise their clusters' immediate needs and how they want these needs to be addressed. The categories include: security; rule of law; infrastructure and natural resources; education; health and nutrition; agriculture and rural development; social security; natural disaster preparedness; and private sector and economic development. These needs are then prioritised and the document produced is the DDP or District Development Plan. Translated from the NABDP questionnaire (Second hand form, District Profile) accessed through personal communication, 08.06.2010.

⁴⁰⁴ Conversation with an aid worker in Kabul, 23.08.2011; Interview with Governance Advisor of IJC #82, 05.04.2012.

maintained their own power and influence over the population by using their formal governance positions in the district. The different interventions from the centre by the MRRD and the IDLG (i.e. the formation of CDCs and DDAs by the MRRD and the IDLG's attempts to formalise the old *qaryadar* system) created confusion over the roles and responsibilities of the institutions and legitimacy of village representation on the one hand, and allowed the government elites to strengthen their patronage networks whilst ostensibly supporting democratic processes, on the other.

7.5. Conclusion

This chapter introduced Bamyan Province and two villages (Katakhana and Akhundun) in Yakawlang District as micro site(s) of intervention where the MRRD and IDLG's local governance programmes' interventions and implementation processes were examined.

It has provided a historical context of the governance relations that characterise Bamyan, its socio-political context, and how it has evolved and changed as a result of external interventions, war, migration, and the flow of NGO funding as well as the emergence of a new class of political elites who, for most of the post-1980s, have led the region and created their own patrimonial system of rule based on party and factional patronage and financial and military support from external resources.

The chapter highlighted a much weaker international footprint in Bamyan compared to Nangarhar. However, central state interventions sponsored by international donors provided political, financial and infrastructural support for Bamyan, leverage for its provincial leadership to strengthen their power bases across the province and resources to provincial and district governors' offices.

The chapter pointed out that the NSP programme that was framed with a purpose of building local governance institutions and creating a mechanism for distribution of resources, was understood by locals as being mainly for the latter purpose. It was discussed that MRRD's village intervention through the NSP resulted in the political merger of the two villages of Katakhana and Akhundun in order to form a Community Development Council (CDC) and an agreement to divide the chief and deputy chief positions of the CDC between them in order to meet NSP standards. The chapter critically examined the overall process of the NSP implementation which resulted in the consolidation of a newly emerged village elite's role who gained his legitimacy through the CDC elections as its first chief and then started to take the lead in broader aspects of village governance by maintaining his role as a gatekeeper for resources, influencing positions of power. The chapter argued that, although limited and still symbolic, the

NSP's conditionality for women's inclusion gave women the opportunity to assume a gatekeeping role, at least in regard to women-focused resource distribution within the area they were representing.

The chapter highlighted that at district level, the creation of District Development Assemblies by the MRRD, gave the institution a significant amount of leverage in district and village governance relations, as most development projects offering economic resources were channelled through the DDAs. For the IDLG, however, the district governor's office has become a place to expand influence over local governance through the formalisation of *qaryadar* positions at the district level. The formal registration of a *qaryadar* for all the 300 villages of Yakawlang could be seen as an attempt by the IDLG to claim that they too have village level governance appointees, who moreover are legitimised through an official certificate approved through a court procedure.

In sum, this chapter highlighted how the same types of local governance interventions by the central state can have different outcomes on the ground.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

In this final chapter, I conclude by first summarising the overall thesis. I then revisit and address the three core research questions and finally I draw out and elaborate upon the theoretical contribution and implications of the research.

8.1. Summary of the thesis

This thesis focuses on the everyday practices and underlying politics of two local governance interventions in post-2001 Afghanistan. In **chapter two**, it engaged with two inter-related bodies of literature which provide contrasting analytical lenses for looking at local governance in Afghanistan. First, it drew upon research and writing on liberal peace-building, institution building and 'good governance'. This was followed by a brief examination of the literatures on hybridity, and the ethnography of aid, which provide a more critical and nuanced analysis of international interventions than the positivist literature on liberal peace-building. This body of work – both its policy oriented and critical variants – provides an analytical framework and entry point for understanding the declared goals and underlying logic of international intervention in the area of governance. Second, it drew upon historical political economy perspectives in order to examine governance, less as an ideal type model, than an empirical reality, shaped by competing material interests and power relations in specific contexts at particular historical moments. The chapter addressed the discursive nature of liberal peace-building and the complexity of studying liberal interventionism and proposed a combined set of theoretical lenses for the study of evolving local governance relations.

This thesis examines governance interventions in the context of broader post-Cold War shifts towards liberal interventionism. It highlights the complexity of liberal interventionism and how liberal peace-building is driven (in most cases) by an ahistorical and functionalist view of the state. It also examines how discourses on gender, state-building and governance converge around notions of the 'protection' and 'liberation' of women by the intervening forces. Discourses related to gender equality and the 'liberation' of women are, on the one hand, adopted to promote liberalisation and democratisation and gender equality, whilst on the other hand, they are used to justify various forms of interventions (including efforts purportedly aimed at societal transformation) that are not necessarily based on liberal and democratic norms.

Drawing on the example of the World Bank's Community Driven Development model, I explored the link between local level resource distribution and social engineering. The chapter highlighted that programme interventions – to borrow from Li, are not 'invented

ab initio' (Li 2007:6). Neither are such interventions simply the 'product of a singular intention' (*ibid.*). Rather, they are the result of a dynamic process of bargaining, contestations and negotiations between the conflicting interests of international and national actors. The chapter introduced a historical political economy approach as an alternative framework for the study of local governance relations that result from interventions by the state and its international sponsors. It was posited that a political economy approach provides a lens for unpacking the workings of power and its effects on local governance programmes. I looked at patrimonial and (neo)patrimonial approaches to studying governance relations in developing countries affected by conflict and interventions. This work highlights the complex entanglements between formal and informal institutions, the sedimentation of old and new structures in societies undergoing transition and the linkages between patriarchy and (neo)patrimonial systems. I also attempted to link (neo)patrimonial systems with the concept of hybridity as an alternative lens for studying liberal peace-building interventions; given the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of governance relations that result from central government and international interventions, it is necessary to develop a combined conceptual framework that can help us respond to the key research questions in this thesis, both in terms of understanding the logic, rationale and assumptions of liberal interventionism and also the power relations that evolve as a result of it.

In **chapter three**, I introduced and explained the research methodology. I first positioned myself in the research process, as an 'insider/outsider' and explored the implications of this for my approach to the research. The chapter then outlined and justified the extended case method that was adopted, and elaborated in further detail on the specific research methods. The chapter also highlighted the security and ethical challenges of the research and how these were addressed during the process of conducting this research.

Chapter four provided historical background on local governance relations in Afghanistan. It showed how a complex range of factors at the international, national and local levels shaped local governance arrangements. The chapter explored how notions of 'the village', 'the local' and 'local governance' are understood within the political and economic context of the country. I argued that villages have been central to efforts to create order, authority and legitimacy in Afghanistan historically. Rather than seeing them as autonomous 'village republics', the chapter highlighted how Afghan villages are inseparable from wider networks of power and authority. Changing local governance relations spanning three time periods were examined; pre-war (pre-

1978), the years of war (1978-2001) and post-international intervention (2001-2014). By examining different local governance interventions in different phases, I highlighted how traditional forms of patron-client relations, in which the economic basis was mostly agricultural, have evolved during the years of war (and after) as a result of external interventions. The chapter demonstrated how the political economy of war had an important impact on local governance with the emergence of a new class of actors, war commanders, who in many places supplanted the traditional *khans* and *maliks*. The status of women in Afghan society and efforts to 'protect' them or change their status has been a recurring and highly politicized theme in Afghan history. The chapter discussed how radical approaches to change women's status were met with resistance, whether it was the 'emancipation of women' under the PDPA regime or the Taliban's restrictive rules to imprison women in their own homes. It also highlighted the post-2001 Afghanistan, where debates on women's inclusion were frequently linked to creating economic opportunities rather than fundamentally challenging patriarchal systems.

Chapter five, the first of three empirical chapters presented an historical analysis of two different central government donor funded village and district governance programmes by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG). By analysing the emergence of the MRRD's National Solidarity Programme (NSP) as one of the largest national programme interventions, I demonstrated the competing interests of different actors and institutions that shaped the programme's design. The chapter also explored the extent to which gender issues were incorporated into debates and policies on local governance; it became an unconditional part of the MRRD's programmes, while for the IDLG women's inclusion was not prioritised in the structures of the district councils they sponsored, nor did the IDLG provide quotas for women's inclusion at district and village councils in its Subnational Governance Policy. Changes in donors' policies, especially that of the US, played an important role in this process. The involvement of national elites who took part in rationalising, formulating and designing the local governance programmes, as well as international donors as funders and technical advisors, led to two contrasting local governance programmes. The MRRD's source of influence and power at the local level was primarily through its provision of resources in the form of block-grants. IDGL, in contrast, was largely a broker of influence in the form of formal positions – including through the *qaryadar* system and creating councils through district governors' offices. The chapter concluded by contrasting MRRD's efforts towards

building modern institutions based on 'good governance' principles with IDLG's efforts which largely aimed to strengthen and centralise patronage networks.

Chapters six and seven examined how local governance programme interventions were operationalised and implemented in two varying contexts in the provinces of Nangarhar and Bamyan, and how local populations at village and district levels received them. The chapters outlined the different historical, political and economic characteristics associated with each context, followed by an analysis of the socio-political and economic characteristics of the villages and districts that were studied. The chapters observed how war-time politico-military elites continued to play an important role in district level governance by inserting themselves in key patronage networks and occupying key positions, though at the village level customary leadership was still important in some places. In Nangarhar the village elites, who consisted of elders and politically influential actors, played a strong gatekeeping role in controlling different aspects of the programme intervention. In the two villages in Bamyan, in contrast, power and control was not monopolised by any one family or actor and the programme intervention opened the possibility for the emergence of new patrons who legitimised their position by using the programmes' external resources. Both chapters exposed the sedimentation of local governance institutions with new structures and organisations being grafted on top of older ones, leading to complex hybrids of the formal and informal settings.

8.2. Addressing the research questions: studying local governance

This section is structured around the first three core research questions of the thesis. The fourth question will be responded to in the final section.

These three research questions are:

1. What were the underlying rationales and interests behind the MRRD and IDLG's interventions and how was this reflected in their design and planning at national level?
2. *How were the MRRD's NSP and the IDLG interventions, including their gender conditionality, received by elites and the wider population of women and men at the local level?*
3. What effects did these interventions have on local governance and power relations, and how, if at all, did they differ from those intended by the programme planners and implementers?

8.2.1. What were the underlying rationales and interests behind the MRRD and IDLG interventions, and how were these reflected in their design and planning at national level?

Local governance relations have been at the centre of contests for control and authority in Afghanistan historically and also in the post-2001 political context. The battle for governance and its ownership constitutes the centre of gravity of conflicts between the Afghan government, international institutions and the forces fighting the government, each justifying its actions to legitimise its influence or rule. Consequently, Afghan leaders whether at national or local level, are not passive recipients of the outcomes of such contests. Rather, they are active participants seeking to turn interventions to their advantage by accepting and accommodating advantageous elements and resisting or subverting those that endanger their power and authority.

This thesis examined the underlying rationales and interests of international and domestic actors and institutions which shaped the formulation and implementation of local governance interventions. It should be noted at the outset that the mainstream discourse on ‘good governance’ and liberal peace-building has little to say about why and how local governance programmes are developed and implemented on the ground. A blueprint of a one-size-fits-all model of Weberian institution-building is typically replicated in different contexts, usually adapted to some extent, but with the expectation that the model will operate through its prescribed set of rules and produce local governance institutions. Critical accounts on liberal peace-building interventionism usually take a macro-approach, in part inspired by competing theories of international relations (Mallaby 2002; Duffield 2003, 2007; Etzioni 2004; Paris 2006; Aguirre and Borgh 2010; Roberts 2009; Richmond 2009; Chandler 2010). Of these, some emphasise, and arguably overstate the hegemonic role and homogeneity of international actors while understating the agency and role of national actors involved in the process (Duffield 2003; 2007; Chandler 2010). Other analysts focus on institution building as a priority or insist on rapid reforms or reliance on existing informal or ‘illiberal’ structures to solve the problems the interventions encounter.⁴⁰⁵

This thesis has demonstrated a far more complex reality of liberal interventionism and its implications on the ground. First, it was observed that international intervening institutions cannot be all homogenised as one. The official discourses and stated goals of international intervening institutions were in general different from their actual behaviour on the ground. This was, for instance, reflected in international donor support

⁴⁰⁵ See **chapter two** section 2.3.6 for further elaboration on these different positions.

to the IDLG from 2008 to 2012, when both donor and national institution rhetoric was about decentralisation, whereas in reality most resources were channelled to strengthen patronage networks loyal to the President and the central government.

Second, the thesis demonstrated that there is a great variability over time and between different international actors and their positions. It was demonstrated how shifts in overarching policies affected the way governance programmes were funded, prioritised and operated on the ground. The shift from counter-terrorism to counter-insurgency (COIN) that resulted in channelling development funding through the military is a case in point. The research also showed the differences between various international actors including the World Bank (using the example of Community Driven Development intervention in Afghanistan or the National Solidarity Programme), the UNDP (through the example of supporting the MRRD's National Area Based Development Programme for building district councils) and the USAID and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) (for supporting IDLG's various programmes at the district level). While focusing their interventions mostly on the same site(s), these institutions had very different working approaches.

Third, the multiplicity of donors and variance in their approaches translated into ad hoc and often contradictory programming. These contradictions provided a space for domestic actors to more forcefully insert themselves into the process and broker programmes according to their own interests. The agency of national actors in the context of liberal peace-building is frequently downplayed by critical scholars who, from the perspective of international relations, view donors as hegemonic and unified in their attempts to impose external views, ideas and norms on the recipient nation. By contrast, a close examination of the history of the formulation and design of the National Solidarity Programme, for instance, showed how national actors, including the government or NGOs, negotiated with international donors on various aspects of the programme on the basis of their own expertise, experiences and interests, and in this way significantly shaped the way the programme was operationalised.

Fourth, personalities and individuals do make a difference in the process of programme formulation and interventions. This was evident in the way gender conditionalities were applied as part of the MRRD's programmes on local governance institution building. Despite scepticism by national and international actors, for instance, Ashraf Ghani as the finance minister and Haneef Atmar as MRRD minister (at the time) used their positions of power and authority in relation to both international donors and national

actors to accept this as a fundamental part of all the MRRD's programmes and to this date, MRRD follows this principle in all its programmes.

Fifth, the thesis reflected on the distinction between 'the national' and 'the international'. Often considered as binary and mutually exclusive, the line between them, in many contexts, has been quite blurred. Take, for example, the case of Dr Ashraf Ghani and his political career as an Afghan-international hybrid. An Afghan native, he has studied the country's social and political history and worked with various international institutions, including the World Bank. He also emerged as a member of the national elite in the post-2001 political context, using and relying on patronage networks during both the 2009 and 2014 elections while running for president. In his relations with international intervening forces, he is capable of negotiating using their language and interests, while at the national level; he has been able to harness his national identities (including dressing in traditional attire) and experiences. All these capacities give him and similar actors a significant level of authority which they use to influence the way programme interventions are directed. More importantly it also informs us of the hybridity and transnational alignments that are reflected in examples like this, where dichotomies of 'national' versus 'international', local versus global and so forth are blurred.

Sixth, as a source of power that signifies material resources and positional goods to be fought over, these programmes alter incentives, structures and institutions. Whether in the form of material resources or positions of authority, these goods enable actors to mobilise support, build up their power bases and strengthen their patronage networks. In terms of material resources, however, the block-grant entitlement in the NSP gave members of the village and district councils stronger leverage in comparison with those sponsored by the IDLG whose members' access to resources was reliant on the international military's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and other donors' interest in their area.

Seventh, and related to the point above, in addition to their material role, the programmes are important symbolically. Aid programmes are performative and theatrical in some respects and they enable international and national actors to become players and to assume different roles. This was evident in programme formulation, design and implementation. For instance, the MRRD's interventions could also be seen as a nationwide effort to familiarise its recipients with liberal norms such as democratisation processes, elections and women's participation, or in other words, trying to change socio-political norms by introducing these values. At the same time,

looking at the performative and theatrical aspects, one should not underestimate the changes these interventions bring to local power dynamics.

Eighth, the programmes are introduced at different levels with varying justificatory stories and narratives. For instance, the senior leadership of institutions such as the MRRD, when communicating with donors, would emphasise the social engineering and state-building aspects of the programme; when facing local populations, the same actors would highlight the socio-economic benefits. In other words, within the same programme, there are different ways of engaging with and talking about the programme's politics at different levels.

Ninth, and finally, because of the complex amalgam of actors and interests involved in the process, the very notion of 'ownership' of local governance relations by different government institutions is far more complex and contested than publicly acknowledged by aid donors who invoke the term to mobilise support and legitimise a particular intervention.

8.2.2. How were the MRRD's NSP and the IDLG interventions, including their gender conditionality, received by elites and the wider population of women and men at the local level?

This question addresses the interface between the recipients of the programme interventions, on the one hand, and the international and national actors and institutions as intervening forces on the other. After examining the dynamics surrounding the programmes when they 'enter' the local terrain, I summarise the overall findings.

The main difference between the MRRD and IDLG interventions should be noted at the outset. The MRRD's intervention through the NSP focused on the creation of a new institution, the Community Development Council (CDC), and provision of services through block-grants that each CDC received. Similarly at the district level, the MRRD's District Development Assemblies (DDA) had access to financial resources to fund CDC cluster projects. In contrast, the IDLG played an indirect role by using its district office authority to formalise the role of the *qaryadar* (village administrator). The IDLG's intervention did not include service provision in a direct form, but by formalising the *qaryadar* position, it entitled the individual to become a 'legitimate' gatekeeper of resources to the village.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, while the MRRD's intervention was directly linked to

⁴⁰⁶ This is in case we assume that legitimacy is defined as 'formal' and formal is defined as being officially, through a court certificate, registered as a village administrator or *qaryadar*.

power relations and resource distribution, the IDLG's intervention (being very much still in its initial stages when this research was undertaken) was mainly centred on power and influence without direct links to resource distribution. If the CDC and its leadership are not legitimised constitutionally, however, in the longer run a *qaryadar* could use his authority and legitimacy to become the main gatekeeper of all resources and become superior to the CDC leadership.

Throughout the thesis, I have made a distinction between the village population that refers to men and women of all identities and socio-economic status, and what I term the village elites.⁴⁰⁷

In the two cases presented in the thesis, elite formation had followed different trajectories. In Nangarhar, the village elite represented a collection of actors who had emerged as 'elites' at different phases in recent history. It now included the *khans*, the commander, the ex-PDPA official, the *mawlawi* or religious scholar, and some newly emerged young politicians from the post-2001 political settlement. In Bamyan, however, the village elites were not as visibly representative of previous regimes as in Nangarhar. One important reason is the history of Yakawlang district as a battleground, a central hub for factional rivalries during the early 1990s and then experiencing huge loss of life in the Taliban massacre. Almost none of the informants in Bamyan's case spoke openly about their factional affiliations with any of the politico-military groups. The elites in the two villages in Bamyan consisted of community elders, non-factional religious scholars who ran the local grand mosque and madrasa and the first CDC chief, who emerged as a patron by gaining his authority and legitimacy through the CDC. Similar to Schetter's argument, each of the 'local' or village elites were also players at higher levels of governance – district, provincial and national – as well as interacting with international actors (Schetter 2013:5).

The dynamics of programme implementation in the villages studied revealed how similar interventions can have different outcomes in different contexts: in the Nangarhar village, the village elites maintained full control over the overall implementation of the programme, from its introduction to elections for CDC members and representation in the clusters that formed the CDCs. The first CDC elections took place without major conflict. This was due to the fact that all members (including women) running for CDC membership were carefully selected by the village *malik* who was backed by the existing village leadership. And so the *malik* was 'elected' by these members as the CDC chief. Similarly, when the district office called on villages to register their formal

⁴⁰⁷ For further elaboration on definition of elites see chapter two, section 2.4.4.

village representative or *qaryadar*, the same *malik* appeared in this role in the village studied. The Nangarhar case thus exemplified a dynamic whereby the existing power structures and village elite maintain full control over interventions by both the MRRD and the IDLG and use the programmes to suit their needs and interests.

In the villages studied in Bamyan, I observed a much more complex form of power relations: the administrative merging of two neighbouring villages meant that the two villages not only shared representation in one CDC, but also had to share the resources accessed through it. The sharing was probably made easier because the power structures in these villages in the immediate post-2001 context – when the NSP was introduced – were not as entrenched as in the Nangarhar case. Representatives from both villages agreed to form one CDC and share positions by allocating the CDC chief to the larger village and the deputy-chief position (reserved for women) to the smaller. All these arrangements were made prior to the formal establishment of the CDC, hence the first CDC elections were mostly a staged performance. The CDC in this case became an important power hub for attracting resources and for the exercise of public authority by both its chief and deputy chief. The CDC chief, who had not previously been a part of the village elite, emerged as an important patron for both villages by taking up more intra-village responsibilities, although he was still not as ‘important’ as the *malik* in the Nangarhar case.

With regard to village representation through the district office, each village registered its *qaryadar* separately. The *qaryadar* registration took place after the second CDC elections when the preferred candidate of the smaller village did not win, and a new CDC chief was ‘elected’. This led to a different dynamic between the two villages in terms of selection of *qaryadars*: the larger village selected a young man in his mid-twenties who was probably supported by the ex-CDC chief, the smaller village selected a man in his sixties who also was a CDC member. The selection suggests that the smaller village was trying to maintain its position and identity as a separate entity by having a *qaryadar* who was older and therefore possessed more authority. It also meant that the creation of the CDC did not result in a full and sustained merger of the two villages, but was seen as a temporary agreement for securing access to resources.

In both the Nangarhar and Bamyan cases, the second CDC elections were not as smooth as the first. This was due to programme specifics as well as external factors. By the time of the second election, the programme’s higher visibility as a source of resource distribution drew the attention of other village elites who wanted to get involved. Moreover, national level elections and the related prominence of patronage

based politics had changed people's views and understandings about elections. The result was a sharper contestation and conflictual CDC elections in both cases. In the village in Nangarhar, conflict emerged when another village elite with a dual background (the son of the old *malik* and a war time commander) tried to become a member of the CDC and run for the CDC chief position. This was contested by the existing CDC leaders who mobilized other elites in the village to declare that the whole village wanted the previously elected CDC leadership to continue its work and ignore the results of second elections. In Bamyan, conflict emerged when the smaller village failed to get its candidate elected as the CDC chief. Thus, in both cases greater awareness that the MRRD intervention meant resource distribution caused conflict; and in both cases disagreements were addressed through mediation, negotiation and interactions between villagers and village elites outside the formal CDC structures.

In both Nangarhar and Bamyan the general village population in the field sites readily accepted gender conditionality that made women's inclusion a prerequisite for receiving the MRRD's programmes. Situating this finding in the broader historical context of the cases, I argue that this acceptance is linked to changes in the socio-political and economic relations that occurred as a result of decades of war, migration and mobility that altered the attitudes of rural populations. However, the lack of objection should not be mistaken for allowing women full and effective participation in everyday village governance affairs. Patriarchy remains a dominant mind-set. Men, as well as women, operate within this system rather than challenging it. The programme conditionality to include women was accepted by local elites mainly because it ensured resource provision that was badly needed. However, it was also evident that the women themselves, by showing agency, managed to use their leverage of inclusion – even though symbolic – to make their own way towards a greater public role.

In both cases studied, the village elites very carefully used strategies to meet the programme intervention's demand for inclusion of women, while continuing to set limits on what women could and could not do. Seniority (in terms of age) was the principal criterion for the selection of female representation to the CDCs, but other factors were also relevant. In Nangarhar, an older woman who belonged to the largest kinship group in the village, had prior experience of a public role and was married to a man who was not native to the village, was selected by the village elites to become deputy CDC chief. In the Bamyan case, a widow, who also had previously had a public role in her community and did not have any particular link with the village elites, was selected not only to represent women from her village, but her entire village as deputy CDC chief.

Conservative norms constrained the female CDC member in Nangarhar from taking part in broader village governance matters beyond CDC meetings. This was especially evident when matters were discussed after Friday prayers in the mosque, which women do not attend. In Bamyan no similar spatial limitation was observed for the female CDC members. However, the Bamyan case illustrates another tendency. When the female deputy chief of CDC had to choose between spending part of a block-grant on a project that would benefit women from both villages, or use it solely for the benefit of her own village, she chose the latter. Women's inclusion in the CDC did not necessarily mean that the female participant privileged 'women's issues' in the village governance sphere. The existing power structures, dominated by a patriarchal mentality, succeeded in compromising the NSP intervention's conditionality to include women, limiting women's meaningful participation in village governance. What the two cases revealed was that the intervention's conditionality was, in fact, only concerned with the façade of women's representation, not how effective and meaningful such representation should be.

Meanwhile, the two cases also demonstrated how recognition of female inclusion through the NSP conditionality was used by women in the villages who were able to extend their active role beyond the villages into the district councils and governance relations. In both Nangarhar and Bamyan, one woman from each CDC was elected to the District Development Assembly (DDA). Here, both – in their own capacity – were able to attract a large amount of resources for their constituencies. The woman in Nangarhar also used her position as a DDA member to approach other sources of funding. This included joining a male member of her village to obtain financial assistance from the international militaries through PRT's funding for the village school. The woman in Bamyan represented women from five neighbouring villages in the Yakawlang district DDA. She, too, was able to mediate distribution of resources through her membership. Additionally, in both cases, but particularly in Bamyan, CDC membership contributed to opening up the space for women's gatekeeping role. The Bamyan member became a key point of contact for NGOs and other organisations interested in providing services for women. In general, the village leader or elders operate as gatekeepers but the MMRD interventions have modified this general pattern to an extent; when resource providers approach male members with projects for women, they are referred to the female CDC deputy chief. Nevertheless, women's gatekeeping role for women-focused resources is still at an early stage and remains strongly influenced by the broader power dynamics and governance relations in the villages.

8.2.3 What effects did these interventions have on local governance and power relations, and how are these effects different from those intended by the programme planners and implementers?

The intervening actors and institutions did not follow a commonly-held goal in either the design and formulation phases of the programmes, or during their implementation. Instead, the various actors involved in the processes had their own ambitions and personal or institutional interests. The thesis highlighted the complex nature of local governance relations that developed around the interventions, thereby confirming that such programmes cannot be studied and understood simply in terms of success or failure; they involve a far more complex process of interactions, contestation and negotiations, leading to mixed and often ambiguous outcomes. It was also clear that local governance relations cannot be analysed without a historically informed understanding of how the relevant elites have evolved over time and how different kinds of power are exercised through informal as well as formal institutions.

As for the sustainability of the organisations, structures and mechanisms introduced at the village and district level, the research suggested a number of determinate factors. In terms of local governance institution building, both the MRRD and IDLG's interventions were overwhelmingly donor dependent, i.e. their continuation was entirely subject to financial commitment from external donors. At the village level, in both Nangarhar and Bamyan, the local population, whether involved in the CDC or not, saw the programme interventions by the MRRD solely as a mechanism for service delivery. In both provinces, the formal objective of the CDC to serve as a village governance institution was not clearly communicated to the recipients, nor was it understood or accepted by the villagers as such. The example in Bamyan where both villages registered separate *qaryadars* confirms the point that the CDC did not become a replacement for existing power structures and governance relations. Hence, for the recipients of the NSP, the CDCs only became activated when the programme brought in projects or resources.

In Nangarhar, the resources attracted through both the village and district councils were highly significant. This brought the programmes to the attention of various power-brokers in village and district elites, each having an interest in gaining further access to, and benefits from, the CDCs and DDAs. The Behsud District DDA, led by an ex-commander, exemplifies how war-time elites could influence these structures. At the village level, the conflict that emerged during the second CDC elections, when the village commander tried to replace the existing CDC chief, illustrates how the

programme intervention affected local power dynamics. Although in Nangarhar the CDC was entirely controlled by village elites, the conditionality, both in terms of women's representation and representation from different parts of the village, opened up opportunities for both women (albeit only those of particular identity and socio-political status) and men from other parts of the village to participate in at least some aspects of village governance. The CDC leadership and village elites in general were not as open to youth representation, and their selection of a younger man to represent one part of the village was a tactical choice to avoid potential competition for CDC leadership and a village elite from that part.

In Bamyan, similarly, CDCs and DDAs were seen more as a service delivery mechanism than as an alternative local governance institution. However, unlike Nangarhar, in Bamyan some of the newly emerged village elites gained their legitimacy through the CDC elections and their authority by acting as gatekeepers to the flow of resources coming to the two villages from different sources. In Bamyan, the active participation of young men in their mid-20s or 30s, both within the CDC and in other aspects of everyday practices of village governance, was quite significant. For instance, a young villager in his mid-20s who held dual degrees from religious and secular educational institutions led the large mosque, and partly the madrasa. The newly emerged patron (the ex-CDC chief) in the Bamyan field site chose mainly young men for positions of power such as the new CDC chief, *qaryadar* for the larger village and imam for the grand mosque and elders such as the village *arbab* become more like retired village patrons. This also presents an interesting dynamic in comparison with Nangarhar where the existing power structures were not open to the younger generation. In Bamyan's case, this move could be linked to the newly emerged patron's efforts to build his power basis by backing younger men for different roles in village governance.

In both cases, there seemed to be a process of sedimentation whereby newer initiatives were layered on top of older ones. For instance, the MRRD began with the NSP intervention creating CDCs, followed by the district level councils or DDAs. Because of national and international level changes in policies and institutions, the IDLG was then established and took on its role as an 'owner' of local governance affairs by creating district level councils formed by district level 'notables'. This was followed by formalisation of the *qaryadar* positions. Although the latter action is not considered by the IDLG officials as a 'local governance' intervention, the IDLG clearly had the ambition of a state institution, seeking to formally expand its influence in this area as evidenced by the re-launching of the formalisation of the village representative

through district offices and the addition of a sub-directorate of village affairs in the district administrative structure.

The result of these different interventions was a complex and hybrid set of power relations at the district and village levels. At both the national level and in the villages, this hybridity was reflected not only in formal and informal institutions, but also in individuals whose combined identities, titles, roles and positions challenge the notion that an actor is only identified by one form of identity or status, for example 'traditional leader'. In the Nangarhar case, for example, the same individual occupied different positions and easily played different roles as *malik*, *qaryadar* and 'elected' CDC chief. Similarly, the village commander was the son of an old *malik* and belonged to the same kinship/tribe as the majority of village elites. As mentioned previously, this was also evident at the national level when programme intervention formulations were discussed by national elites who also had multiple identities. This complexity of the nature of the power relations requires a much more thorough and deeper understanding of these blurred boundaries and the hybrid forms of relations that emerge as a result as well as the implications of liberal interventionism in the short as well as long term.

This thesis has shown the huge differences that developed between what was planned and the actual outcomes of the programme interventions. Socio-political and economic characteristics, historical events and overall power dynamics in different contexts shaped the results of the interventions in particular directions. I have shown in this study how local governance relations in the context of Afghanistan, and particularly the sites selected for this thesis, were conditioned by the complex on-going interactions, negotiations and contestations between local elites and different external institutions, including state and non-state, national and international, actors and institutions.

8.3. How does this research relate and contribute to wider theoretical and policy debates on the efficacy and desirability of local governance programme interventions in conflict-affected contexts?

As already noted, much of the literature on liberal peace-building – both from its proponents and critics – lacks an appreciation of the complexities and nuances of interventions on the ground. There is, however, an emerging body of work which takes us towards a more fine-grained understanding of liberal peace-building and local governance interventions in practice. This thesis aims to build upon and contribute to this body of literature, drawing upon insights generated by discussions of hybridity, aid ethnography and historical political economy approaches.

The historical political economy approach advanced in this thesis, has placed a focus on power dynamics, material interests and sources of legitimacy in the context in which programme and policy interventions are implemented. In light of the literature on patrimonial and (neo)patrimonial systems of rule, I was able to present an in-depth analysis of power relations historically, and, how they have changed in post-2001 Afghanistan. This analysis contributes to our understanding of how pre-war political and economic relations were transformed by protracted conflict and international engagement leading to the emergence of new sources of power and authority and the flow of resources controlled by external powers in the economy of war and violence.

I have, therefore, proposed alternative frameworks from the liberal peace-building literature such as hybridity and ethnography of aid to further interrogate the logics and rationales of interventions.

Meagher, in her study of African hybrid governance systems, highlights the complex outcomes of efforts to transform local governance through external interventions using the examples of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the historical context and looking at empirically informed analysis of how hybrid political orders operate on the ground (Meagher 2012:1077). The empirical evidence in this thesis, too, demonstrated how local governance interventions' rationales and logics differ and produce different and sometime inconsistent outcomes in varying contexts. Scholars who worked on liberal intervention alternatives such as hybridity (MacGinty and Williams 2009; MacGinty 2010, 2011; Pugh 2005; Pugh et al. 2009; Mallett 2010) and ethnographies of aid (Crewe and Harrison 1998; Mosse 2005; Lewis and Mosse 2006; Li 2007) have added to our understanding of how international interventions interact with local political economies in conflict-affected societies. However, I have used the concept of hybridity with some caution – I see it as useful analytically but it is not necessarily something to be celebrated or prescribed (see, for example, Wardak and Hamidzada 2012; Aguirre and Borgh 2010).

The literature on (neo)patrimonial systems of rule has been helpful in expanding further the changing contexts in which actors are no longer bound to the classic form of patron-client relations. The (neo)patrimonial lens is helpful in informing us how the loyalty, dependency and socio-political relations change between patrons and clients (Médard 1982; Khan 2005; Beekers and van Gool 2012). This thesis has developed this further by linking (neo)patrimonial systems with the concept of hybridity which is helpful in expanding our understanding of the role external interventions play in this

process of changing power dynamics and governance relations in conflict-affected settings.

I have, therefore, drawn on insights generated by the literature on hybridity, ethnography of aid and (neo)patrimonialism in order to unpack the complex nature of liberal interventionism in general, and more specifically local governance programmes and policy interventions. This theoretical orientation eschews universal templates and highly normative analysis. Instead, it aims to reach a more nuanced and complex understanding of how governance interventions are negotiated, mediated and played out in particular times and contexts.

Conceptually, I have looked at governance and, more specifically, at local governance as an empirical reality rather than an ideal, blueprint model. Following Long and Long's (1992) analysis, I argued that local governance interventions are not "simply the execution of an already-specified plan" (Long and Long 1992:35) of activities and actions, but rather develop as an unplanned, complex set of processes with multiple dimensions. By focusing on power relations and material interests in specific contexts under difficult circumstances, (both in terms of the broader nature of studying conflict-affected settings and different aspects of my own position as a researcher), this study provides a unique empirical contribution to the limited body of work on local governance relations in the broader context of international interventionism by using Afghanistan and selected villages and districts as sites of intervention. A particular contribution of this study is its enhancement of the existing scarce ethnographic data on villages and their power dynamics in Afghanistan.

Schetter, in his edited volume on *Local Politics in Afghanistan*, highlighted the urgent need for a deeper understanding of how Afghan societies work (Schetter 2013). His critique of existing academic discourses on 'failed/fragile' states that portray Afghan local politics in a distorted way by highlighting the 'deficiencies' (*ibid.*) was one of the inspirations for this study (Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Kalyvas 2006; Justino 2012). In the research I followed a historical political economy approach combined with ethnographies of aid and hybridity lenses in my examination of local governance relations, not in order to generalise the findings or to prescribe 'solutions' for the 'deficiencies' and 'problems', but rather to look at the local settings or villages as site(s) of multiple forms of interventions, and to study the complex and hybrid nature of the interactions, negotiations and, indeed, contestations between the local elites, formal and informal actors and institutions, beyond the local settings that shape everyday practices of local governance.

Limitations of this research

The research also has its limits. It is important to note that in the study of local governance, generalisation can be risky. I do not claim that the findings from these two particular local settings should or could be generalised. But while taking cautious measures to avoid generalisation of particular local events in given times, it is also important to highlight that villages or local settings and their governance relations cannot be understood in complete isolation and disconnection from general events and situations beyond the local boundaries.

Another limitation to acknowledge here is the potential for bias while studying people and their socio-political and economic relations. As addressed in the methodology chapter, my position as an 'insider/outsider' and my world views as the individual who carried out this research, inevitably have generated some bias in the analysis of the events and processes I followed.

Areas for further research

In this thesis, I looked at the gender dimension of local governance programme interventions and how women found, or were given, the opportunity to have their space in certain aspects of local governance relations. This area deserves further research to examine the state-building and gender relations from a political economy perspective.

Writing in a different subject area, Kalyvas (2005) makes an important point on the problem of social science research reducing the study of warfare to military details instead of looking at the social and political factors that affect the onset and/or termination of civil wars (Kalyvas 2005:88). His point is relevant to this thesis too, which shows how different phases of war and conflict have directly affected not only politico-military and formal structures of governance, but has also changed people's behaviours, world views and the structures of political economy that shape the way they govern their communities. Relatedly, Justino (2012) highlights the emergence of local governance structures during civil wars in the 'absence' of 'government' or when it is "deposed or heavily contested" as an area that is seriously under researched (Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2004) cited in Justino 2012:14). She rightly points out that 'absence' of government does not necessarily mean absence of governance relations as there are always different non-state actors who wield means of violence and contribute to reshaping and reconfiguring local power dynamics and governance relations.

The work of both Kalyvas and Justino point to the importance of empirically grounded studies of the local or micro dynamics of civil wars. Although this thesis did not directly

address the violence aspects of micro or macro level governance, by looking at the local settings as a site of intervention, I showed how armed conflict that is linked to, or openly conducted by, external forces reverberated on the local level through the rise (or demise) of elites, and generated programme interventions that reconfigured local governance relations.

In the broader field of local governance relations in the context of international interventionism, there is a strong need for longitudinal, micro level research that examines institutional adaptations to war and interventions over time. This study sought to capture a particular time frame: local governance interventions in post-2001 Afghanistan. As I have highlighted across this thesis, the nature of intervention, policies and approaches to local governance programme initiatives continuously changed and were reshaped over time. At the time this thesis was completed (30th September, 2014) Afghanistan is entering a new phase in its relationship with international intervening forces; it also is on the verge of having a new government in place. Both events have direct implications for the future of the programme interventions examined in this thesis. Hence, one of the areas for future research could be the expansion of this study in the context of the political and security transitions to re-examine how local governance relations are affected by these changes.

Annex One: Sample of Key Informant, Semi-structured Interviews and Participant Observation Notes

Example of key informant questions:

Interview # _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Name of informant/designation: _____

Agreement with sharing the information: _____

Observation notes:

1. Can you explain, the overall process of NSP formation: like who was involved, what were the key points negotiated among actors involved and how the programme started?
2. How is NSP seen at MRRD and beyond (i.e. overall government and its donors)? Is it seen more as a development/charity/governance/political all, none or one?
3. How do the external actors such as World Bank and the central government institutions such as Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and IDLG foresee the changing roles of CDCs in the future?
4. How does the CDC leadership deal with conditionality such as gender, participation etc. How were they included in the first place and how were they operationalised?
5. What are the main challenges the NSP face this stage? Please elaborate how these challenges are different at different levels?
6. Is there a variation in terms of methodology on CDC formation? If not, did any issues emerge as a result of following the same rule in very different contexts?
7. How many districts are there? How many DDAs are formed? How many villages?
8. How does the MRRD or specifically the NSP staff define the village?
9. What are the routine activities of CDCs? Are they expected to take the lead on village governance? How?
10. Can you provide an estimation of how many % of CDCs are sustainable, i.e. how many can survive after the block-grant is ended?

Interview # _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Name of informant/designation: _____

Agreement with sharing the information: _____

Observation notes:

1. Under what conditions IDLG was formed? What were the main justification for creation of a Directorate and not a ministry for instance?
2. What is the perspective of IDLG on local governance? How does IDLG understand village governance and the way it operates?
3. How do you define local governance? Can you elaborate how you distinguish between various layers of local governance? e.g. provincial, district and village.
4. What mechanisms are in place to 'watch' local governance practices at village level and district level? Do you have specific plan on how government is represented beyond the district level?
5. Where does the CDC and Village Council debate stand at this stage? Is there an administrative/executive role for both? Do you foresee the CDCs as future Village Councils? If, yes or now, how?
6. How to get some general understanding of Darajabandi [ranking] of provinces and districts? Is there such thing for villages?
7. a.) Has IDLG or any other institution made any attempt to define the village? Or mapping them? Mapping districts? b.) Do we have officially recognised boundaries for districts and villages?
8. Who is the right person to explore further questions on the following matters:
9. Is there a law/act presented to parliament on LG?
10. Can you elaborate how you have IDLG programmes have been operating? How are their future, in terms of financial support and sustainability?
11. Is there a research unit at IDLG?

Examples of semi-structured informant questions:

CDC Members

Interview # _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Name of informant/designation: _____

Age: _____

Family origins/kinship: _____

Agreement with sharing the information: _____

Observation notes:

1. Before becoming a CDC member where did you live (did you migrate? Where) and what is your source of income? What job did/do you have?
2. How have you become a CDC member and since when? Tell us about how you were informed about the NSP, how CDC was formed and how were you elected?
2. What are your responsibilityse and role as a CDC member and what position do you have within the CDC?
3. Please explain in detail your experience in the CDC, how often do you meet? What do you discuss in the meeting, how you decide about priorities etc.?
4. How was the CDC introduced to you? Did you know about what conditionality the programme had? For instance, about women's inclusion in the Shura, how was it received in your village?
5. Was there any problems, disagreements about the programme's conditions? Women women's inclusion and other matters? If yes, please elaborate.
6. How many times did you have CDC elections since the CDCs are formed, tell us about each elections and how it happened.
7. In your opinion, what is the purpose of CDC or its broader programme the NSP? Why you think this programme is introduced in your village?
8. Tell us about your village, how different people receive this programme and the CDC?
9. Did your village introduce a qaryadar to the district? When? Who is this person and what is his role/responsibilities?

On village history, mostly elderlies:

Interview # _____

Time: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Name of informant/designation: _____

Age: _____

Family origins/kinship: _____

Agreement with sharing the information: _____

1. Please inform us about your village. How many people live here? Who they are, what are their profession or sources of income, does your village have divisions? How many, who lives in each division?

2. What is the history of your village, or what do you know about it, how was it formed, who lived in it, are you native from this place or have you moved in recently? What is the name of your village and why does it have this name?

3. Do you have a job? How did you earn living in the past/present? Do you have older children? What is their job and their role in the village?

4. Who represented your village in the past [divide past with before war, during war - Mujahiddin period, Taliban period- and since 2001], how was this person selected for this representation?

5. How this person (malik/arbab) engaged with the district headquarter, explain with an example of how this relation worked, for example in terms of tax collection, dispute resolution etc.

6. Since past ten years, which political or previous regime actors are active in your area and what are their roles?

7. When did you hear about the NSP and the CDC? How? Did you participate how?

8. Who are the CDC members? What were/are their role in the village before CDC membership and now?

9. What activities/projects did the NSP implemented in your village? How did you or your community benefit or did not benefit from these project?

10. Who is Qaryadar in your village? Tell us about his role and responsibilities in the village and how he handles relations with the district and other institutions outside the village?

Examples of participant observation notes:

Interview # _____

Date visited: 13-19th March 2012

Time: 6 days

Place: Nangarhar, Jalalabd, Behsud, Qala-e-Janan Khan

Participants: 13 people in total

My third visit to the village included spending four days and three nights in the village, the observations will be all noted in detail in this document, while full details of the interview notes will be in separate interview notes. My visit this time included interviews with more informants in the village, a day trip to the district centre and meeting some actors in Jalalabad city. Although some of the Jalalabad city interviews were postponed, as the Nowroz holidays have begun.

(...)

“This time, I was back in the village on the Friday before Nowroz [The Persian new year which is widely celebrated across Afghanistan]. When the men in the family returned from the Friday prayers after lunch, the head of family Gh. [Name withheld] said to his family over dinner that ‘Mullah again proved us that celebration of Nowroz was *Harram* [forbidden], he bashed out all about it and said the villagers should not celebrating it.’ This was not welcomed by female members of the family as they have an engaged son and an engaged daughter and one common practice during Nowroz is sharing gifts with the bride’s family and this is a relatively public ceremony. Gh’s daughter-in-law [who is a teacher in the village school] responded to her father: ‘But it is the tradition all the way from our great-grand parents’ time, how come this Mullah discover this now?’ Gh. responded: ‘I know what you mean, but you know that if things decided in the mosque, it must be followed, so no public event, just do it within families, do not make a big noise about it.’ Gh’s daughter-in-law: ‘We shall do what everyone is doing, we need to bring some Nowrozi [the gifts shared during new year] to our brother’s fiancée’ she adds. Gh. Doesn’t react to this statement and adds: ‘No one buys anything, even preparing Haft Mewa [a traditional fruit salad served during Nowroz] is not approved, I don’t know, but he says so, he says no Haft Mewa, no Nowrozi and don’t even mention Happy Nowroz!’. So, after long discussions between Gh. One of his sons, his daughter and daughter-in-law they finally agreed to go” (...)

Observation notes from Bamyan:

(...)

“International Military actors at provincial/district/village: After USA decided on civilian surge besides the military surge, the number of American forces in Afghanistan increased, besides army soldiers who arrived in Afghanistan to join in all provinces, there was also at least two civilian advisors at district level. For instance, in Bamyan province the military representation structure is as follows:

Political Officer of PRT (Chief)

Military Commander

Police Commander

State Department Officer (US)

A) USAID Coordinator

B) Two Advisors (RoL and Agricultural) - Provincial level

C) These two advisors have two representatives in districts through (CERP) [Commanders Emergency Response Program] - District level

At the village level these actors do not have direct contact, though except when they are distributing material and speaking to people. In Bamyan and Yakawlang district I was told the New Zealand and Singapore forces are mainly engaged in health sector and helping with the local Yakawlang hospital.” (...)

Annex Two: List of Interviews

Kabul Interviews

No.	Name* and Position	Date
1	Barna Karimi, Deputy Director of IDLG	03/08/2011
2	Tariq Ismati, NSP CEO MRRD	09/08/2011
3	M. Asif Nang, Technical Deputy MoE	15/08/2011
4	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program Officer	14/08/2011
5	AKDN Officer	14/08/2011
6	IDLG Officer	16/08/2011
7	Sussane Schmidel, TLO	17/08/2011
8	PTRO programme staff	18/08/2011
9	Gender Consultant, MRRD	22/08/2011
10	Abdul Basir, Tawanmandi DFID/UK	25/08/2011
11	NATO Civilian Representative' Governance Advisor	31/03/2012
12	ISAF IJC Representative	05/04/2012
13	Lynda Grandfield, IDLG Embed/Ex-PRT Commander	10/04/2012
14	Shahmahmood Miakhel, Country Director USIP	05/04/2012
15	Ghulam Jelani Popal, IDLG Chief (Ex.)	12/04/2012
16	Wais Ahamad Barmak, Minister MRRD	15.04.2012
17	UN-Habitat NSP Staff in Kabul	18/04/2012
18	Yama Torabi, IWA	10/05/2012
19	PTRO Staff	13/05/2012
20	Shafiq Samim, Deputy MoE on Islamic Education	14/05/2012
21	Advisor to Senior Minister Arsala	17/05/2012
22	Mohammad Ehsan Zia, Ex-Minister MRRD	19/05/2012
23	Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, Chairman of Transition	11/06/2012
24	DACAAR NSP Staff	11/06/2012
25	The World Bank Governance Advisor	19/06/2012
26	DFID Officer	11/06/2012
27	Cartography Directorate	19/06/2012
28	Swedish Committee for Afghansitan, NSP staff	19/06/2012
29	Snr. Minister Amin Arsala, Head of Governance cluster	20/07/2012
30	Palwasha Kakar(NSP/AREU)	28/06/2012
31	IDLG Governance Advisor	21/01/2012
32	Jolyon Lesily, Ex- UN-Habitat	12/07/2012

33	Haneef Atmar, Ex-MRRD/MoE/MoI & Party Leader	05/11/2012
34	IDGL Officer	03/11/2012

*Some names withheld for confidentiality purposes.

Nangarhar: Jalalabd and Behsud Interviews

No.	Name* and Position	Date
1	University Lecturer (Male)	26/11/2011
2	PC Candidate part I (Female)	02/01/2012
3	PC Candidate Part II (Female)	05/01/2012
4	NGO leader (Male)	05/01/2012
5	Ex RRD Director/OCNSP	14/03/2012
6	Local resident	15/03/2012
7	Dr. Alam Ishaqzai, Mustufi (DoMoF) Nangarhar	16/03/2012
8	Behsud District Governor	17/03/2012
9	Moderiat e Qaryajat - Behsud	17/03/2012
10	Behsud MAIL district-Director	04/05/2012
11	Behsud BRAC Social Organizer	04/05/2012
12	Behsud DDA Chief	05/05/2012
13	Nangarhar Haj and Auqaf provincial director	05/05/2012
14	Nangarhar MoE Provincial director	04/05/2012
15	Women's Affairs' Director	02/06/2012
16	NABDP Office, Jalalabad. (Male and Female staff)	02/06/2012
17	Independent consultant	03/06/2012
18	Discussion with male group (FGD)	04/06/2012
19	Discussion with women group (FGD)	04/06/2012
20	Female NGO worker, Jalalabad	02/06/2012

*some names withheld for confidentiality reasons.

Village Interviews (Nangarhar)

No.	Persons	Date
1	Village Malik, CDC Chief Part I	27/11/2011
2	Mullah of Qala-e- Janankhan	27/11/2011
3	Deputy CDC (Female)	28/11/2011
4	Farmer cluster head for CDC	29/11/2011
5	Project beneficiary/female youth	30/11/2011
6	Village Malik, CDC Chief Part II	01/12/2011

7	Ex-CDC member (Female)	03/12/2011
8	School deputy Principal	03/12/2011
9	CDC Secretary	03/12/2011
10	CDC Treasury	20/12/2011
11	Teacher, CDC member	20/12/2011
12	Community Elder Part I	22/12/2011
13	Cluster head from Mandes Qala	22/12/2011
14	Deputy head cluster Shura Ghonday	23/12/2011
15	Community Elder	23/12/2011
16	Farmer and non-original	23/12/2011
17	Village driver non-original resident	23/12/2011
18	Mullah of non-registered Mosque Shuraghonday	24/12/2011
19	Village doctor children specialist	24/12/2011
20	AbdulWahab Banda Cluster head	25/12/2011
21	Mullah of AbdulWahab Banda	25/12/2011
22	Community Elder Part II	13/03/2012
23	Son of community elder.	15/03/2012
24	District council member/religious scholar	15/03/2012
25	Community Elder Part III	16/03/2012
26	District council member/religious scholar part II	16/03/2012
27	Youth leader, QJK	16/03/2012
28	Female Deputy CDC Part II	16/03/2012
29	Women FGD (village women from central QJK)	15/03/2012
30	Men FGD (CDC members on history of programme)	17/03/2012
31	The commander QJK	15/02/2013
32	Teacher and leading a local council	15/02/2013
33	District council member/religious scholar part III	15/02/2013

*some names withheld for confidentiality reasons.

Bamyan: Bamyan city Interviews

No.	Persons	Date
1	MRRD/NSP's Bamyan OC	17/08/2011
2	AKDN Bamyan	17/08/2011
3	UN-Habitat Bamyan	18/08/2011
4	Provincial Directorate of MoE	20/08/2011

5	Provincial Directorate of Haj and Auqaf	20/08/2011
6	Governor Sarabi, Provincial Governor of Bamyan	20/08/2011
7	Conversation with CCA Bamyan	20/08/2011
8	Meeting with CCA - Kabul*	19/04/2012
9	Sarwar Hussaini Deputy MoE - Kabul*	23/04/2012
10	Conversation with CCA Part II	23/05/2012
11	Shuhada Organisation, Bamyan	23/05/2012
12	Provincial Council member (Female)	24/05/2012
13	Provincial Council member (Male)	24/05/2012
14	Religious scholar	24/05/2012
15	Focus Group Discussion, male and female	24/05/2012
16	Mr. Mubariz of UN Habitat	29/05/2012
17	Richard Prendergast, PRT Chief Bamyan.	28/05/2012
18	NGO Leader (Male)	28/05/2012

() These interviews were held in Kabul, but were related to Bamyan and its history so I list them here.*

Yakawlang Interviews

No.	Persons	Date
1	District governor	22/08/2011
2	CCA Yakawlang	20/08/2011
3	UN-Habitat Yakawlang Social Mobilisers	01/10/2011
4	Sub-director of Qaryajaat	24/08/2011
5	Officer of Qaryajaat at dist. office	20/08/2011
6	Elderly woman, Yakawlang	20/08/2011
7	Conversation with Bedmushki villagers	20/08/2011
8	UN-Habitat - Yakawlang DM (Male)	01/10/2012
9	Social Council of Yakawlang	02/10/2011
10	Agri- Cooperative	01/10/2011
11	Yakawlang resident	26/05/2011
12	Shopkeeper in Yakawlang Nayak	28/05/2012
13	BRAC Officer, Yakawlang	28/05/2012
14	Yakawlang resident	23/05/2012

Village interviews (Bamyan)

No.	Persons	Date
1	Ex-CDC Chief	23/08/2011
2	CDC Female Member Munshi(writer)	23/08/2011
3	CDC Chief for Katakhanah/Akhundan	01/10/2011
4	Famele CDC Chief Katakhanah/Akhundan	30/09/2011
5	CDC Member Farmer Akhundani	30/09/2011
6	NGO Worker COAR on DDA	02/10/2011
7	CDC Member Secretary from Katakhanah	30/09/2011
8	CDC Member Farmer Katakhanah	30/09/2011
9	Community Elder Akhundani	29/09/2011
10	Community Elder Arbab Katakhanah	30/10/2011
11	Qaryadar of Akhundani	29/09/2011
12	Qaryadar of Katakhanah	02/10/2011
13	Mullah Imam Katakhanah	02/10/2011
14	Mullah Imam of Akhundani	01/10/2011
15	Madrasa Teacher (Male)	29/09/2011
16	School Teacher	01/10/2011
17	Ex-CDC Chief Part II	26/05/2012
18	A young Scholar Mullah of Akhundani	26/05/2012
19	Deputy CDC Chief from Akhundani (Female)	27/10/2011
20	Literacy teacher, Akhundani	26/05/2012
21	Girls high school Katakhanah, Yakawlang	27/05/2012
22	Women's Focus Group Discussion in Akhundani	26/05/2012

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